A phenomenological study of students with hidden disabilities in higher education: A cross sectional study of learning support needs in a University in the UK.

UNIVERSITY OF DERBY

A PHENOMENOLOGICAL STUDY OF STUDENTS WITH HIDDEN DISABILITIES IN HIGHER EDUCATION: A CROSS SECTIONAL STUDY OF LEARNING SUPPORT NEEDS IN A UNIVERSITY IN THE UK.

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Abbreviations used in the study

BERA	British Educational Research Association
CAQDAS	Computer Assisted Qualitative Data AnalysiS
DDA	Disability Discrimination Act
DSA	Disabled Students Allowance
DBIS	Department for Business Innovation and Skills
DRC	Disability Rights Commission
ECU	Equality Challenge Unit
HE	Higher Education
HEI	Higher Education Institution
HESA	Higher Education Statistics Agency
HEFCE	Higher Education Funding Council for England
HEA	Higher Education Academy
JHS	Joint Honours Scheme
LSP	Learning Support Plan
NSS	National Students Survey
QAA	The Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education
SEND	Special Educational Needs and Disability
SNA	Study Needs Assessment
UCAS	University and Colleges Admissions Service
UDL	Universal Design for Learning
UNESCO	United Nations, Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation

Abstract

This phenomenological study was designed and conducted in a Post 1992 'new university' situated in the UK. The aims of the study were a) to investigate inclusive practice amongst disabled students in higher education, b) to explore students' perceptions on their lived experiences of the support provided c) to explore disabled students' experiences of the process in gaining support d) to identify the kind of practices disabled students used to support their own effective learning in HE. A sample of 14 students, aged 19 to 56 volunteered to participate in the study.

The study was underpinned by inclusive theory and equality policy provided for higher education institutions. Rich data from phenomenological interviews was analysed using thematic and narrative analysis. Analysis of the data uncovered new knowledge for lecturers and support staff in understanding disabled students' lived experiences as they approached support systems and classrooms in higher education.

The key findings involved a) barriers to communication and collaboration between students and lecturers, b) attitudes of staff and the asymmetries of power experienced by students in accessing support, c) issues around student anxiety, dependence and independence and ownership of learning, d) the idea that a reasonable adjustment could be unreasonable and embarrassing and evidence of tokenism in supporting students.

The recommendations included a) the need for more in-depth training for all staff in equality and inclusive practice and inclusive course design, b) more support for students in negotiating their Study Needs Assessment, c) bridging the communication gap between Student Wellbeing, lecturers and students.

The changes in funding to the Disabled Students' Allowance came into force during 2016 which has consequently reduced or removed support for students who have disclosed a disability. Due to such changes, it will be even more important for universities to support the training of students, lecturers and support staff in creating and maintaining more inclusive environments in the future.

Chapter 1 Introduction and background to the study

1.1 The aims of the study were to:

- explore disabled students' lived experiences of learning support in higher education
- explore the current legislation on learning support for disabled students and reasonable adjustments required in HE
- explore disabled students' experiences of the process in gaining support
- identify the kind of practices disabled students use to support their own effective learning in HE.

The site for the study was a Post 1992 'new university' which gained its university status in 1992 as part of 1980 – 1990 reforms. The term new university refers to the focus university's original status as a former polytechnic college in higher education in England. The university recruits a diverse range of students and is well known for its engagement in widening participation strategies. The university enrols over 30,000 students across all of its programmes which includes short courses, access and foundation courses, foundation degrees, undergraduate and post graduate degrees which covers most academic disciplines (UoD 2017).

1.2 Rationale for the study

The rationale for the study was based on the rise in numbers of disabled students entering HE (Boyd 2014; VanBergeijk *et al.* 2008; Pliner and Johnson 2004). An example of this rise was reported by the HE Statistics Agency (2015) whose data showed a rise in disabled students from 2.9% in 2002 to 8.5% in 2016 in the focus university. This was supported by Gibson (2012) who suggested the rise in numbers of disabled students entering HE had been recognised in government policy such as the Dearing report in 1997 and also during the Bologna Process (1998). Both policies were involved in ensuring HE systems across Europe became more inclusive and demonstrated higher standards of accessibility to all students (European University Association 2015). In addition to these policies the Department for

Education and Employment (1999), the Department for Education and Skills (2001), the Disability Rights Commission (2005), and the Equality Act of 2010 also contributed to recognise the need to widen the participation of disabled students.

Gibson's (2012) research into the lived experiences of disabled students confirmed the rise in numbers of disabled students entering HE. She suggested the rise in numbers was 'related [to the] national and international research on the topic of disability which was considered to be a 'complex matter' of social, educational and economic inclusion' (Gibson 2012:354). The Office for Disability Issues reported in 2009, how members of the public had still felt discomfort and awkwardness towards disabled people. It appeared 'prejudice towards disabled people was widespread' (Office of Disability Issues 2009:9). A report from Scope (Aiden and McCarthy 2014) suggested the general public appeared to demonstrate negative attitudes and awkwardness towards disabled people; for example:

> Two thirds (67%) of the British public feel uncomfortable talking to disabled people. Over a third (36%) of people tend to think of disabled people as not as productive as everyone else…. A quarter (24%) of disabled people have experienced attitudes or behaviours where other people expected less of them because of their disability. One fifth (21%) of 18 – 34 years old admit that they have actually avoided talking to a disabled person because they didn't know how to communicate with them. (Aiden and McCarthy 2014:3)

Although the legislation (Equality Act 2010) provided greater access for disabled students in HE, Madriaga *et al.* (2011) argued that HE society remained in the act of understanding and applying the legal requirements for the inclusion of disabled students. This relates to the way the Equality Act and its legislation was received in HE and the focus on understanding and meeting of the legal requirements for the inclusion of disabled students. This was made more challenging by the changing landscape in HE (for example in the introduction of a student fees/loans system and threats to the DSA) where the development of inclusive policies and practices may have been at odds with the dominance of neoliberalism and its hegemonic impact which is discussed in section 2.5.

Following an analysis of key literature (Gibson 2012; Beauchamp-Pryor (2012a/b); Burke (2012); Madriaga *et al*. 2011; Smith 2010; Allan (2010a/b); Pumprey 2008; and Barrington 2004), which suggested disabled students experienced barriers to learning in HE, the aims of the study were established. In many cases the literature suggested lecturers wanted to be inclusive but did not know how to ensure their teaching and curriculum content were inclusive (Smith 2010; Matthews 2009). The augmented research aims were laid out in table one (see section 1.8). Initially I was interested in the students' perception of support, however, this developed into an exploration of the students' lived experiences to provide deeper insight into students' experiences of learning in HE.

1.3 Statement of the problem and developments of the study during professional practice

This study has grown from the work undertaken as a university lecturer with an interest in special educational needs and disability (SEND). The degree I work on is a high recruiting Education Studies course where approximately 10% of students disclose a disability. A lecturer according to the Cambridge Dictionary (2017) is a person who teaches in college and in higher education, although the role entails much more than just teaching. The term 'tutor' is also used for the lecturer role in HE, however, I have used the term 'lecturer' in order to relate to a wider audience. I also have the responsibility of working as a Joint honours Scheme Subject Leader where I manage the academic progress of students who are combining two subjects. During these years of working with students in higher education I was frequently approached by students seeking help and advice due to learning difficulties and not coping well at university. The majority of students were concerned about grades and not managing the workload well. Some students, however, were struggling because they had a disability such as dyslexia, autism or epilepsy. These types of disability were considered to be hidden because they were often not as visual as a physical disability (Fuller, Healey, Bradley and Hall 2004a). The nature of hidden disabilities is often cognitive or emotionally based, rather than presenting as a physical impairment. The students often suggested they were encountering difficulties in the classroom that were both surprising and a worry to them. After discussions with students about their

lived experiences in and out of the classroom I encouraged them to approach their lecturers to discuss their support needs.

There were many reasons why students felt reluctant to approach lecturers. The students expressed concerns about appearing different or being seen as underachieving or less capable (Madriaga *et al.* 2011). There were often elements of anxiety, depression and potential learned helplessness which needed addressing. The students often did not want to be labelled, showing some resistance to disclosing their difficulties (Matthews 2009). On occasions I took the students down to the Student Wellbeing Service in order to make an appointment for them to speak with a member of staff who could organise support for them. This department was often referred on the internet as Student Support Services. The role of the Student Wellbeing Service was to provide information and learning support for students, which is additional to the support that may be provided by the lecturer. These visits to the Student Wellbeing Service often resulted in the compilation of a Learning Support Plan (LSP). After many years of struggling for some students, there was at last the hope of some support for their learning. The LSP, however, was often misunderstood or misinterpreted by the student and the lecturers, which caused further difficulties for all concerned.

1.4 Developments of the study from personal experience

This study into disabled students in higher education (HE) also holds personal meaning for me as several of my own children were diagnosed with a disability. Four out of my seven children have entered HE over the last decade. One daughter, who was diagnosed with epilepsy, dyslexia, and Asperger's Syndrome, completed an Art degree under much pressure as a result of her disability and what appeared to be limited support from lecturers. She experienced difficulties with her working memory and experienced cognitive difficulties as a result of persistent epileptic seizures. Asperger's Syndrome and dyslexia were also prevalent amongst my other children who entered HE. These disabilities caused them various levels of distress in terms of coping in a highly social university environment. The amount of reading and the pressures of writing became too great for two of them which sadly

resulted in them leaving their course. Another child with Asperger's Syndrome and Dyslexia had recently completed his studies after receiving support for his social difficulties. Although personal and family orientated, these lived experiences with my children provided insight into the experiences of disabled students both at home and in HE and helped to frame the study.

1.5 Disseminating the developing study to my colleagues

Conversations with colleagues also shaped this study and their input suggested that whilst they were often aware students needed some kind of support, there appeared only limited resources to hand. It was also suggested they often felt unsure about how to manage the disabilities encountered within their classes; and felt pressed for time due to meeting research and teaching excellence performance targets within the expectations of their role (Allan 2010a). Concerns about how to design inclusive sessions and manage the needs of disabled students were addressed in the study.

The focus university had provided a range of training opportunities in equality and diversity, each being underpinned by its Equality and Diversity policy. The sessions included training on the different aspects of equality policy and specific disabilities such as dyslexia, autism and Attention Deficit Hyper-Activity Disorder. Although there were expectations by the focus university for all staff to undertake mandatory equality training sessions, the study demonstrated that managing disability still appeared to be a difficulty for some lecturers.

1.6 The gap in knowledge and practice

Whilst the majority of disabled students were found to do well in HE (Madriaga 2010), it was important to recognise that many disabled students experienced challenges in their learning. Students may or may not have taken up the opportunity to disclose their disability upon application to their course (UCAS 2016a). Those students who had disclosed a disability were

contacted by the university's admissions service in order to process an identification of disability which was followed by a Study Needs Assessment (SNA). As part of this process the students may have been involved in meeting internal or external agencies before entering the HE classroom. A potential gap in knowledge for some lecturers was that whilst they had some basic knowledge of disability, they did not have an understanding of disabled students' lived experiences of managing learning in the classroom. Nor did they know how to remove barriers to learning and make reasonable adjustments for the students.

Another potential gap was connected to lecturers' understanding of disability and their limited knowledge of the processes involved in disclosing disability. This included the journey the disabled student experienced in receiving support before they arrived in the classroom. Ajani and Moez (2011:3927) referred to this as the 'gap between knowledge and practice'. They suggested that whilst professionals may be 'proficient on paper' and may have a good understanding of the learning theories surrounding their practice; they may not know how to implement the theory into their practice and make reasonable adjustments. It was thought possible that professionals may not have undertaken mandatory disability training for some period of time and may not be aware of the updates to inclusive policy and theory in their practice.

A further motivation that took place during the study involved changes to the Disabled Students Allowance (DSA) (Willetts 2014). Havergal (2015) lamented that the cuts would impact upon the amount of support available for disabled students, as well as place additional expectations on support staff and lecturers. This study is therefore a timely piece, presented during a period of cuts in funding and reviews on inclusive practice.

1.7 Benefits of the study for stakeholders in HE

The study supported the 2010 Equality Act and sought to reposition equality policy into the realms of good practice for HE. The study uncovered the lived experiences of disabled students, revealing challenges experienced through

the disclosure of disability and access to appropriate support. This study has provided lecturers with essential understanding of the need to be prepared to make reasonable adjustments to their teaching and course design to benefit all.

Additional understanding was found to benefit the Student Wellbeing Services in terms of managing the individual needs of disabled students. This could support their training of lecturers and wider staff within the institution on how to support disabled students in the classroom. The study was constructed to be useful to wider educational settings and equip lecturers and support staff with the knowledge and understanding to support inclusive teaching practice. It was expected the study would help to empower students to disclose their support needs and feel better placed to disclose a disability. The study could also benefit students in becoming aware of the need to develop the independence to approach lecturers in order to promote a co-construction of support (between the student and the university).

Further benefits for policy makers within the quality and equality sections of HE were found as staff used the findings to address funding issues and potential government cuts to systems. The study served to provide examples from practice that could contribute towards inclusive policies which were realistic, and manageable for all staff working with disabled students. The study also could contribute towards the need for continuous training and development in disability awareness. Training in disability would also contribute to the widening participation agenda in terms of inclusive curriculum and assessment design for a diverse community. Such training would enable lecturers to be mindful of the need to develop all students towards independence and align students towards future employment as part of the competitive market HE was engaging with (Burke 2012).

An international audience would have interest in this study as there has been a global interest in inclusion since 1948. Legislation such as Article 26 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights set out the fundamental human rights for mankind across the globe. In 1960 the UNESCO Convention against Discrimination in Education helped to support understanding around

discrimination and in 1994 the Salamanca Statement and Framework for Action on Special Needs Education promoted inclusive education to support all learners with emphasis on those with special needs or disability. The Bologna Process (1998/99) (see section 2.4) was put into place to ensure HE systems across Europe demonstrated inclusive systems which were comparable in standards. More recently in 2006 the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities reaffirmed that disabled people should enjoy human rights and freedoms. Whilst each country is likely to have developed its own inclusive policies these were considered to be central policies that had been agreed by the United Nations from which each country sought to base its policy on inclusion. Although this study was focussed on a university in England, there could be comparable experiences to relate into global practice.

1.8 The original aims and the augmented aims

Original aims	Augmented aims	Reason for change
Explore disabled students perspectives on learning support	Explore disabled students' lived experiences of learning support	The term 'lived experiences' connects more effectively with phenomenological research and suggests a deeper meaning of student experience
Explore disabled students' experiences of the process in gaining support	Explore disabled students' experiences of the process in gaining support	No change
Explore the current legislation on learning support for disabled students and reasonable adjustment required in HE.	Explore the current legislation on learning support for disabled students and reasonable adjustment required in HE	No change
Identify the kind of practices disabled students use to support their own effective learning in HE.	Identify the kind of practices disabled students use to support their own effective learning in HE.	No change

Table one – Aims and augmented aims

1.9 The proposed participants and theoretical framework

The participants were disabled students in HE who had disclosed a disability and who were in possession of an LSP. The theoretical framework for the study was based on inclusive theory and literature and used a phenomenological methodology with the addition of hermeneutic interpretation to explore the lived experiences of disabled students in HE.

The following diagram shows the theoretical framework used in this study.

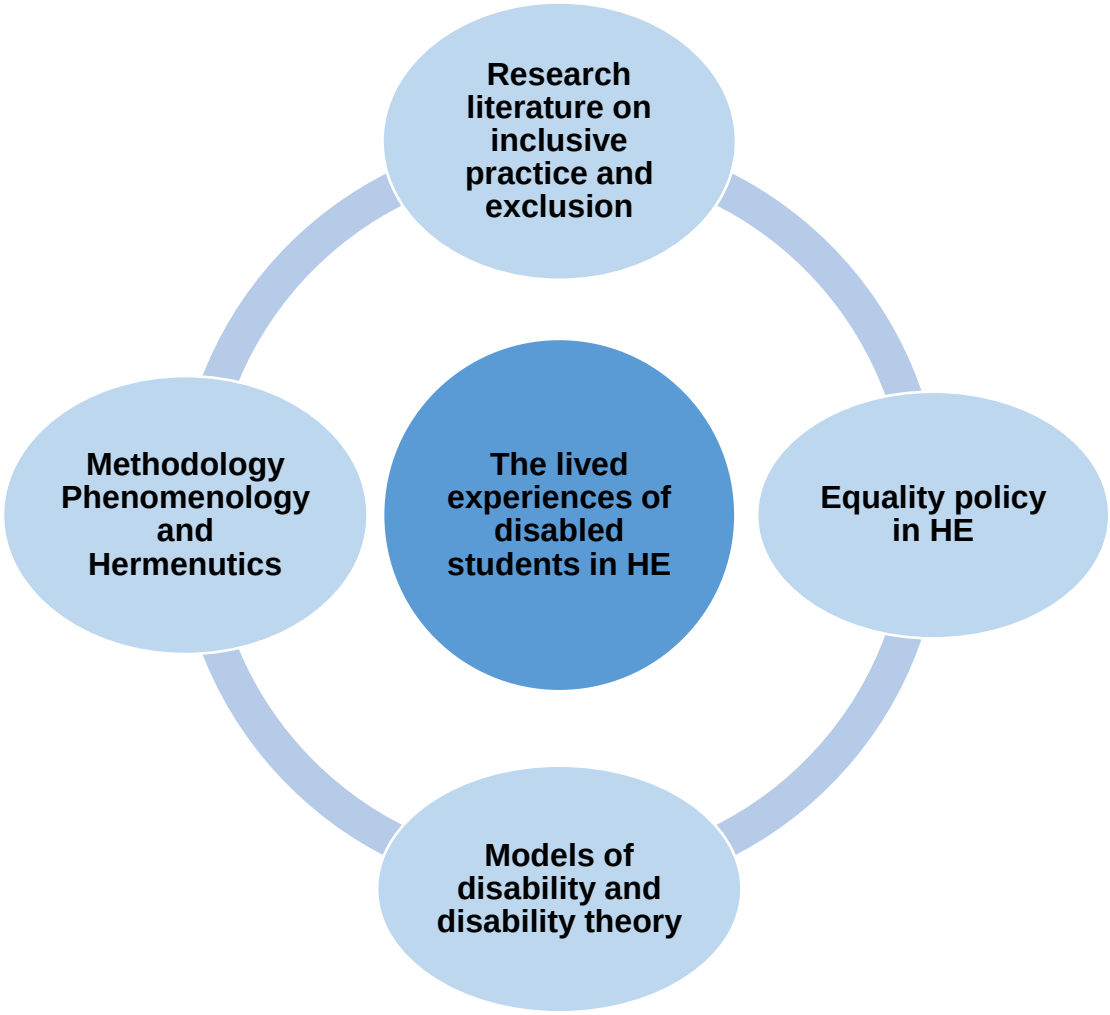

Figure one - Theoretical framework

Chapter 2 Inclusive Practice in Higher Education

2.1 Introduction

This chapter provides an overview and evaluation of the current literature and inclusive government policy underpinning inclusive practice in HE. This is done by keeping in mind the changing landscape within HE where neo-liberal philosophies are considered as a dominant culture in which the inclusive practices of HE are to be developed. The review gives an explanation on the theoretical models of disability and their potential impact upon the ideologies of lecturers and students. The review is supported by learning theories and government policies in HE classrooms, including a rationale for inclusive HE course design. Whilst there is much literature surrounding the notion of inclusive practice in education, research into HE support services appears more limited. A further area of limited literature was in listening to, and understanding, the perspectives of students' with hidden disabilities and utilising student voice to provide guidance for course and policy change. In the final chapters of this thesis, the study provides a contribution to bridge this gap in the literature.

2.2 Defining Inclusive practice in HE

Avramidis, Baylis and Burden (2002:158) argued that inclusion was perceived by most educators to be a 'bewildering concept which could have a variety of interpretations and applications'. The term 'inclusion' may also be seen as the opposite to exclusion, whereby exclusion could be the process undertaken to remove or disadvantage learners and so 'increase their marginalisation' (Booth, 2005:101). Richards and Armstrong (2008:7) suggested 'inclusion meant different things to different people…'. For example, as Clough and Corbett (2000:6) explained, inclusion could be seen as a 'contestable term used to different effect by politicians, bureaucrats and academics' and should not be considered a 'single movement'. In addition to this, Clough and Corbett (2000:6) suggested inclusion was made up of 'many strong currents of belief, local struggles and different modes of practice and such a definition had yet to be fully realised. According to Florian and Black-

Hawkins (2011:814) the term inclusion was considered to be an ‘educational concept that had no defined precise definition’. They suggested there was a broad consensus and understanding that inclusive education was ‘a process of increasing participation and decreasing exclusion from the culture, community and curricula’ found in education. On the other hand, Ainscow, Booth and Dyson (2006:2) suggested inclusion was about making ‘significant changes to the content, delivery and organisation of mainstream programmes’ and should aim to ‘accommodate the learning needs of all students’. Ainscow *et al’s*. (2006) view of inclusion focused on the changes that needed to take place on teaching programmes in order that lecturers could reach all students and accommodate needs where necessary.

Hodkinson and Vickerman (2009:76) suggested inclusion was about supporting learners to learn together with ‘appropriate networks of support’. They suggested inclusion meant ‘enabling all students to participate fully in the life and work of mainstream settings, whatever their needs’. The addition of ‘whatever their needs’ was seen to be problematic since a reasonable adjustment to cater for whatever those needs were might not be possible or acceptable in a HE setting (Madriaga, 2011). Although reasonable adjustments had been deemed difficult to manage within the mainstream setting of HE, Allan (2010a:609) viewed inclusion as increasing participation whereby barriers to exclusion could be removed. This was where according to Gibson (2016), access could be widened for the traditionally excluded students. Inclusion could be seen as an ‘ideological turnaround to mobilise changes [and] enable [the] participation’ needed for ‘those whose rights had been denied’ (Liasidou 2014:421). According to Young and Quibell (2000:747) rights had been put into place in order to address inequalities and to ‘secure the basic material needs for many groups’. On the other hand, they suggested that providing rights to inclusion could be a difficult issue and that having rights may not be ‘strictly enforceable’.

Hick, Kershner and Farrell (2009:2) informed how the term inclusion was rarely used before the 1990s, suggesting the terms ‘integration and mainstreaming’ were the main terms used to describe the placement of disabled students. It was important to recognise the term ‘inclusion’ could be

‘traced back to the early 1990s’ and was not a new concept in education (Hodkinson and Vickerman 2009:73). According to Gibson (2016:58) ‘inclusion’ had become colonised by government policy makers during the mid-1990s, who had adopted the term as a buzz word ‘due to its wider appeal and links to humanism and social justice’. Social justice being related to the discourse of human rights and the necessity of recognising equal rights for all (Liasidou 2014; Young & Quibell 2000).Social justice included social status, ethnicity and disability, although historically, disability had originally been excluded from the discourse of social justice. Interestingly this was due to the hegemonic views towards disability and its connections to ‘pathology’ which classed disability as welfare concern (Liasidou 2014). This was another indication of inclusion as a political dynamic which in practice in HE, pursues human rights in a paradoxically hegemonic context (see 2.4).

The term inclusion was originally developed as part of the Salamanca Agreement and Framework which was established during the World Conference in Special Education in 1994. The Salamanca Statement and Framework was developed by twenty five international organisations and ninety two governments who desired to provide education for all children and young people around the world. The Salamanca Statement and Framework (UNESCO 1994:7) was referring to schools, but could be related to all levels of education:

> The fundamental principle of the inclusive school is that all [learners] should learn together, wherever possible, regardless of any difficulties or differences they may have. Inclusive schools must recognize and respond to the diverse needs of their students, accommodating both different styles and rates of learning and ensuring quality education to all through appropriate curricula, organizational arrangements, teaching strategies, resource use and partnerships with their communities. There should be a continuum of support and services to match the continuum of special needs encountered in every school. (UNESCO 1994:7)

The Salamanca Statement and Framework (UNESCO 1994) was suggesting here that the core concepts of an inclusive environment should be one that was flexible in its response to diversity (Ahmed and Swain 2006). By encouraging all learners to learn together removed the idea of segregation

and promoted the inclusion of disabled learners in such a way that lecturers needed to proactively accommodate different styles and rates of learning. Hick, Kershner and Farrell (2009:2) suggested the term inclusion was used to describe the extent to which an educational setting welcomed students with a disability 'as full members of the group', and 'valued them for the contribution' they could make. This suggested that for inclusion to be effective, each student would actively belong to and be welcomed to participate in the educational setting. These definitions are so far suggesting that inclusion is a complex area in which to research due to its many multifaceted definitions and interpretations.

According to Fry, Ketteridge and Marshall (2003) and Khan (2014) many HE Institutions (HEIs) followed a traditional, directive format of teaching where larger groups of students were taught in lecture theatres. Khan (2014:319) suggested the lecture was the 'oldest and the best known of all the modes of information transfer' and the transfer of information in this way was one of the benefits for keeping the lecture format. They suggested the lecture format, however, may not easily be adjusted to an inclusive environment in which all could learn. Small group teaching did take place in some HEIs including the focus university in this study. However, this practice may not have been generalised across all HEIs as yet. Ainscow *et al*. (2006) suggested effective inclusive practice required significant change which needed to be made to the content, delivery and organisation of programmes and ideally accommodate the learning needs of all students. According to Richards and Armstrong (2008:7; Allan (2010a); Slee (2008); Pliner and Johnson (2004) the notion of inclusive education was 'both complex and contentious' and the changes involved in making a course more inclusive were likely to be difficult for educators to achieve.

The question needed to be asked as to why managing the inclusion of disabled students in HE was so 'complex and contentious' (Richards and Armstrong (2008:7; Slee 2008; Allan 2010a). Winter and O'Raw (2010) suggested that although the term inclusion was a familiar word in most educational settings, there was much debate as to whether inclusion was achievable in mainstream settings and how it could be achieved in HE

settings. Allan (2010a:609) explained that it was impossible to enable inclusion for all students and that it had to be accepted that ‘some students would fail’. Schools were not designed for all (Beauchamp-Pryor 2012b) and the point needed to be made that the majority of students with complex needs would not be fully included. That said, Winter and O’Raw (2010:3) professed that the principle of providing an inclusive education system where ‘tolerance, diversity and equity [was] striven for, may be uncontested’. However, the lack of a universal understanding of inclusion and how it should be applied in settings meant it was left to individual lecturers to carry on regardless of whether they had any knowledge of disability, or how to manage individual needs. The above statement from the Salamanca Statement and Framework was clear in its intention to ensure lecturers recognised and responded to the needs of disabled students and ‘accommodated’ or made reasonable adjustments as necessary (Winter and O’Raw 2010:3). The statement from the Salamanca Framework (1994) is for me the definition that holds true to the spirit of inclusive practice and is used for this study in the following format:

- all learners should learn together wherever possible
- staff to recognise and respond to the diverse needs of students
- staff to accommodate to students’ different styles and rates of learning
- staff to ensure quality of education for all students
    - through appropriate curricula
    - organisational arrangements
    - teaching strategies
      use of resources.
      (Salamanca Framework - UNESCO 1994:7)

So far the review has presented the terms inclusion and inclusive practice as a complex and contentious process. Such contention is likely to be a challenge within the study as additional layers of definition are added from the student perspective.

2.3 Definitions of the term ‘support’

In addition to defining the term inclusion, Booth *et al.* (2014:9) found the term ‘support’ was also problematic. They found there were different types of support needed by students in HE. These included ‘academic, financial, social and personal needs’ support. Similarly in Jacklin and Robinson’s (2007) research into student support, the term ‘support’ was open to definition, and in need of student interpretation. The students in Jacklin and Robinson’s (2007:116) research perceived support as:

- a listening ear when feeling stressed about workload
- a listening ear when feeling stressed about personal matters
- reassurance that you are capable of doing the work
- someone to motivate you to do the work;
- practical support for example: with everyday jobs

It appeared the students tended to view support as meaning help with their ‘own perceived needs or problems’ and reassurance they were on track to succeed. In addition to this, Jacklin and Robinson (2007:116) suggested ‘three more general categories of “support” [that had] emerged from the data such as:

(1) material resources; such as note taker or support worker, equipment (laptop, Dictaphone) or a service (car parking spaces or extended library borrowing)

(2) guidance, direction, advice or information and

(3) encouragement or recognition of ‘being in the same boat’.

Hence in this study the term support is understood as additional resources or personal one-to-one support by a lecturer, support worker or peers. The review now takes some time to consider the historical rise to inclusive policy and the onset of the medical and social models of disability before returning to consider the role of the lecturer in terms of inclusive practice.

2.4 The politics of inclusion in an HE context

Outlining the complexities of inclusive policy in an HE context is an important underpinning of this thesis. In this section arguments concerning the neo-liberalist nature of inclusion in HE are analysed in order to illustrate its relationship with power.

According to Saunders (2007:1) Neo-liberalism is:

> 'A socio-economic theory that rejects governmental intervention in domestic economy and promulgates materialism, consumerism, and the commodification of many public goods, is a powerful force that has come to dominate the discourse and behaviors of many aspects' [of everyday life, and in this case, education] (Saunders 2007:1).

According to Mikelatou and Arvantis (2017:2) neo-liberalism is a 'predominant ideology of our time and constitutes a form of governmentality and hegemony' which implies a cultural dominance over all other groups. Although the term neo-liberalism had been around since the early 19th century, it was during the 1980s that its main meaning and influence evolved under the political leadership of Margaret Thatcher in the UK and Ronald Regan in the USA (Radice 2013).

The main tenets of neo-liberalism and its connections to widening participation in HE, appeared to be around the dominant views on the importance of employability, the making of profit and the increase in graduateness in order to ensure the essential growth of higher education in sustaining the economy (Burke 2012; Gibson 2015). This did not include social justice or minority group histories (Gibson 2016). According to Radice (2013:408) neo-liberalism was considered to be 'the new public management or new managerialism which combined a 'Stalinist hierarchical of control' within the 'free market'. This control and dominance, was according to Radice (2013:408), where the 'values, structures and processes of private sector management were imposed upon the public sector'. Such control was thought to have involved a 'shift from professional to executive power' where there was more focus on 'performance' and targets and a 'widespread use of

financial incentives' (Radice 2013:408) which can be related to the context of performance within HE.

In view of the context of performance and target setting in HE, Cruickshank (2016:2) discussed the rise of the audit culture in HE which as part of the neo-liberal intervention, expected professionals to 'deliver excellence in terms of teaching and research outputs'. According to Boateng (2012) lecturers were expected to publish or perish although this might be at the expense of other roles such as interacting with students. This demonstrates the power from HE management for lecturers to set targets around the 'increase of performance of professionals as part of the market environment'. Allan (2010a:416) suggested this involved lecturers in writing articles and undertaking research in order to maintain targets for the Research Excellence Framework (REF).

The REF according to Cruickshank (2016:2) is a discipline-based audit which monitors the rate of research outputs such as books, peer reviewed papers, every 5 years. Allan (2010b:408) found this additional activity could 'constrain [lecturers] from managing other duties such as supporting students'. Because of this, Allan (2010a:608) asserted concerns over the 'audit culture' as she believed academics were not using their power to make the necessary changes for disabled people. She suggested the audit culture had 'undermined the culture of autonomy' and that it was 'almost as if the commitment to professionalism and the accountability that went with it, could produce a kind of quietism'. This, it was thought was what enabled the lecturer to 'evade responsibility for the Other' and only partly fulfil their academic duties towards their students. Although policy, according to Beauchamp-Pryor (2012b:58), had clearly indicated lecturers 'should have regard for disabled students as part of their duties'. Additional duties to lecturers such as supporting disabled students could be seen as frustrating and difficult because lecturers were already overwhelmed with the stresses of 'working in a culture dominated by targets' (Cruickshank 2016:4) (see section 2.7). It would seem there was a rights issue here and that there was a need to 'challenge the hegemonic power constructs' within HE in order that all voices could be heard (Gibson 2015:884; Liasidou 2014).

The audit culture under the control of neo-liberalism according Cruickshank (2016:2; Allan 2010b) also involved the National Student Survey (NSS) and the

Teaching Excellence Framework (TEF) where each, alongside the REF played an important role in the markets and metrics of HE. The NSS was designed to provide information from final year undergraduates on their satisfaction of their programme. Although the information was used to compare universities, it was deemed necessary to measure the efficacy of public money and identify where improvements were needed in programmes (Cruickshank 2016:2).

A further neo-liberal intervention involved the Teaching Excellence Framework (TEF) which was discussed in the green paper from the Department for Business Innovation and Skills (DBIS) (2015) entitled 'Fulfilling our Potential: Teaching Excellence, Social Mobility and Student Choice'. The core aims explained in the paper being to 'raise teaching standards, provide greater focus on graduate employability, widen participation in higher education, and open up the [HE] sectors to new high quality entrants' (DBIS 2015:12).

The TEF, according to DfE (2016) involved the assessment of HEIs on the quality of teaching and the outcomes they achieved, and took into account student satisfaction through the NSS and student surveys, employability outcomes and retention rates. Where HEIs scored well, an increase in fees could be enabled in line with inflation and 'link the funding of teaching to quality and not [just] quantity' (DfE 2016a:1). The DBIS (2016a:5) explained that although teaching in HE was already considered to be of a high quality, the debate around teaching excellence should be viewed as an enhancing process to an 'already excellent system' and to 'continue to make a great sector greater still'.

Burke, Stevenson and Whelan (2015:29) in referring to the TEF reminded that HE was in a 'state of flux and uncertainty' due to the 'profound changes taking place' which were driven by the 'forces of… neo-liberalism'. Such changes included a shift in understanding the purposes of HE, from what was once seen as a commitment to the idea of a 'public good' to one of a 'relentless promotion of employability'. HEIs were trying to position themselves as world class and needed to compete for the best students in what was considered to be a 'stratified market driven by discourses of 'excellence' and league table rankings'. Burke *et al.* (2015:30) found that by

examining teaching and learning in HE, the ‘discourses of teaching ‘excellence’ had become hegemonic’ and were ‘couched largely in a performative framework’. This meant performance in terms of teaching could be observed and measured by means of a ‘systematic criteria and standardised practice (Little, Locke, Parker and Richardson 2007:3). Again, demonstrating the control and hegemony of neo-liberalism in HE and control over the audit system which constrained lecturers as to what they were able to contribute to the REF and TEF alongside the expectations of supporting students. In view of such a hegemonic discourse running in the background of inclusive policy in HE, it is necessary to keep in mind the presence of neo-liberalism thinking as the process of inclusive policy in HE is discussed.

2.5 A brief history of inclusive policy in HE

Even with the hegemonic discourse of neo-liberalism, policies for inclusion had been put into place. Inclusive policies were mainly developed during the 1990s under the leadership of Tony Blair from the Labour party who sought to ‘define inclusive education as a dominant theme for policy and practice’ (Gibson 2016:35). According to Harrison, Hemingway, Sheldon, Pawson, and Barnes (2009:17) ‘HE had been largely inaccessible to disabled people prior to the early 1990s’. According to Beauchamp-Pryor (2012b) other groups were recognised in terms of inequality such as lower social groups and ethnic minorities, however, disabled people were often excluded. This demonstrated a lack of understanding of inequality in different groups (Young and Quibell 2000). Barer (2007) reported the HE sector was largely inaccessible to disabled people and according to Liasidou (2014) HE was reluctant to provide support to disabled students until the Higher Education Funding Council for Education (HEFCE) started funding their provision in 1993.

The notion of inclusive practice in HE became more noticeable within the Dearing Report in 1997 after SKILL: National Bureau for students with disabilities, who became involved to ensure there was a ‘more socially representative university sector’ with the call to ‘remove barriers to citizens’ social and economic participation’ (Sheeran, Brown and Baker 2007:249). Shortly after the production of the Dearing Report HEFCE (1999: section 80)

pronounced the ‘minimum levels of service’ required to support students with disabilities. Smith (2010:213) asserted there had been ‘little systematic support… [for] disabled students’ in HE previous to the Dearing report (1997) and Goode (2007) explained that it was not until the onset of the Disabled Students Allowance (DSA) in 1993 and then the amendments to the DDA in 2001, that ‘disability discrimination against students in HE became illegal (DDA 2001 Part IV; Barer 2007).

In 2001 amendments to the 1993 Special Educational Needs Code of Practice guided the further inclusion of learners with disabilities (Pumprey 2008; Smith 2010). The updated Special Educational Needs Act (SENDA) (2001) following on from HEFCE (1999) also introduced inclusion as statutory in HE. According to the above legislation, ‘educational institutions now had a responsibility to make reasonable accommodations to enable disabled people to gain equal access to higher education’ (Matthews 2009:229). This meant it was unlawful to discriminate against disabled people and HE was expected to ensure provision for disabled students (such as laptops, note takers) (Gibson 2016; Beauchamp-Pryor 2012b).

Liasidou (2014) informed that an international impact helped to improve access for disabled people which involved the United Nations (UN) who put forward a set of rules with the aim of providing equality of opportunity for disabled learners. Rule number six emphasised the need for inclusive teaching and learning. Following on from this the United Nations Education and Scientific and Cultural Organisation’s (UNESCO) Salamanca Statement (1994:x section 4) was put into place ‘to endorse the approach of inclusive schooling’ and to ensure inclusive practice became an ‘integral part of all education programmes.

Alongside the production of the Salamanca Statement, the Bologna Process was also underway (this was a voluntary HE reform process established in 1998/9). The aims of the Bologna Process were to ensure HE systems across Europe demonstrated an inclusive system comparable in standards and quality, and that each system was accessible to all students across Europe (European University Association, 2015). According to Gibbs and

Tang (2007) the Bologna Process found the standards in HE procedures, staff degrees, structures and academic freedom varied enormously. The creation of the European Union in 1993 was able to increase the movement between countries so that a transfer between educations in HE became more equitable. The meeting of twenty seven countries in Bologna in 1999 enabled the Bologna process to be put into motion in order to:

- facilitate [the] mobility of student, graduates and staff
- prepare students for future careers and for life
- offer broad access to high quality HE. (Gibbs and Tang 2007:8)

The Amendments to the DDA in 2001, (Part IV paragraph 29:6b) and the Special Education Needs and Disability Act (2001) (SENDA) stated steps would need to be undertaken in order 'to prevent disabled [students] from being treated less favourably than other [students]'. Taylor, Mellor and Walton (2008:1) informed that the amendment to the DDA meant universities had to anticipate the needs of disabled students and publish their 'Disability Statement' and include all information about the prescribed facilities (Part IV, paragraph 30: 7a). The Disability Statement detailed the provision to support students with disabilities which included the financial support, the assistive technologies and the appointment of a Disability Coordinator based on campus to provide support and advice. According to Jacklin and Robinson (2007) the amendment to the DDA in 2001 demonstrated a 'significant impact' on HE in terms of the planning required to ensure compliance to inclusive practice, as well as greater emphasis on how it was possible to ensure the learning needs of students in HE were met (Taylor *et al.* 2008).

These developments were taking place alongside the government's widening participation initiatives which the National Audit Office (2002) informed was seeking to 'recruit and retain more students' from 'poorly represented social groups'. These groups included social class, ethnic minorities and gender, who according to Beauchamp-Pryor (2012), were considered to be oppressed groups who had been viewed as being disadvantaged. It was during the onset of the widening participation agenda that many of the concerns around the inclusion of disabled students began to come to a head. The concern, according to Beauchamp-Pryor (2012a), was the dominant

discourse of Neo-liberalism which according to Wilkins and Burke (2015), was seeking to produce a skilled, qualified, flexible, and adaptable workforce rather than a society tolerant to difference. The expectations of widening participation were according to Wilkins and Burke (2015) to ensure students could make choices and be empowered towards independence and self-responsibility. These expectations meant students would be able to align themselves towards future employment as part of the competitive market that HE was engaging with.

Interestingly, HEFCE (1999) had previously indicated that disabled people were to be part of the widening participation agenda and that they should be provided for. In section 21 of the HEFCE (1999) the report discussed the under representation of 'certain groups of people in HE (which included students with disabilities).The report clearly lays out the importance of providing opportunities for disabled students in personal development and in contributing fully to the economy in order to be recognised for their capabilities and talents.

On the other hand, Beauchamp-Pryor's (2012a) study into the involvement of disabled people and their contribution to inclusive policy, found the developing policies, although they included disabled people, appeared more 'dominant towards increasing participation of certain groups'. Beauchamp-Pryor (2012a:296) was concerned that although disabled people had been invited to contribute to developing policies, she did not think they had been 'properly consulted'. Such concerns involved the type of questioning used and the idea that there were more dominant neo liberalist representatives who had views that were being heard more than those of disabled people. Taylor (2012:12 argued that the failure of inclusive policy was due to the government not recognising the existence of 'difference' and that the 'strands of equality and diversity [were] threatened in a climate of welfare cutbacks, economic crisis and an overhauling of the HE system'.

Unfortunately, during this time, disability was seen as a welfare concern to be dealt with individually by welfare services (Liasidou 2014; Gibson 2016). Ahmed and Swan (2006:98) had also excluded disability from their discussion on diversity suggesting the term (diversity) was used to describe

different ethnic groups within HE. They suggested that ‘in policy terms, diversity had overwhelmingly to mean the inclusion of people who looked different’. Liasidou (2014) also found disability had been excluded and placed into an area of abnormality and individual pathology. She claimed disability was not seen at the same level as social class and ethnic minority. Rather disability was to be managed individually through a reasonable adjustment rather than the need for adjustment being seen as a ‘system problem resulting from power inequalities’. This was where transformative changes needed to take place both in policy and in managing the Neo-liberal views that had ‘overridden any social justice aims which widening participation policy… [had attempted to] achieve’ (Gibson 2016:62. Liasidou and Symeou (2016:2) suggested the government had failed to ensure issues of social justice and learner diversity were included in their discussions on how to strengthen and mobilize structural educational reforms. These omissions were again ‘indicative of the neoliberal imperatives that were driving the education policy reforms’. They suggested that this was in addition to the ‘low priority attributed to issues of equity and learner diversity’ that included disabled students. Such omissions also demonstrated a limited understanding and awareness of the complexities experienced by disabled people (Gibson 2016); and a ‘very narrow and limited view to the advancement of human capital‘(Mikelatou and Arvantiss 2017).

According to Saunders (2007:2) it was Foucault who conducted the theory behind Neo-liberalism, where the individual was viewed as an ‘entrepreneur who should possess ‘personal attributes [that were] aligned with enterprise culture’. This was to include ‘initiative, self-reliance, self-mastery, and risk taking’ (Saunders 2007:2). It was expected that individuals would be able to ‘generate economic activity and be free to make consumer choices’ in order to ‘market’ themselves. For the majority of students in HE there would be no problem here, however, for some students, this might mean removing or questioning their choice to study for pleasure. Thus, acknowledging that knowledge [was] viewed as a ‘marketable commodity rather than the result of a collective social endeavour’ (Radice 2013:412). Cruickshank (2016:1) suggested that marketisation was seen to ‘significantly… devalue education by presenting it solely as a means to gain economic advantage’. Such thinking may

have caused difficulty for disabled students in terms of not being able to exercise freedoms as to whether to be employed or not. Unfortunately, according to Yates (2015:20) disabled people were seen in a neo-liberal context as 'potentially financially burdensome' and to cause a 'detrimental supply side effect in the labour market. Such views in HE around inclusion and opportunities for disabled students increased the concerns that Jacklin and Robinson (2007:115) shared around the 'most effective ways of supporting students with additional learning needs'. Including how to ensure all staff would be willing to address such needs throughout the HE sector.

According to Madriaga *et al*. (2011 and also Sheeran *et al*. 2007) HE was originally considered to meet only the needs of 'the elite', or those people who appeared to be superior to the rest of society in terms of their ability or privilege. Sheeran *et al.* (2007) suggested that before the 1990s there was substantial disadvantage found in terms of students applying for university particularly if they came from a lower social class status or disclosed a disability. This was where the neo-liberalistic views on competitive markets and widening participation were so significant in HE. Widening participation and the discourse of social justice were supposed to be about supporting such students to raise their potential and embrace their position within the economy (Radice 2013). Madriaga *et al*. (2011:916) lamented on how such elitist considerations from lecturers claimed support for disabled students may provide 'an unfair advantage over non-disabled students'. Florian and Linklater (2010) found how some HE lecturers considered disabled students to be less capable intellectually than students without a disability and less able to perform well in HE. Interestingly, Madriaga *et al.* (2011:902) found there 'was no statistically significant difference in academic achievement' between disabled and non-disabled students. This suggested that when the correct support was put into place disabled students could achieve as well, if not better, than non-disabled students.

In relation to this the HEFCE (1999:section 22) informed of the ignorance found amongst staff on the 'capacities of [disabled] students' suggesting the 'indifference and… complacency… tended to come from previous 'experiences of supporting individual students. Thus, lecturers may have

been observing disabled students as a homogenous group to be treated and provided for as a one size fits all group rather than considering the diverse needs within the group. Allan (2010b) asserted that lecturers had obligations to be inclusive, but often lacked the capacity to do so. She suggested lecturers were concerned about the issues of inclusion and recognised there were political dimensions to their role. The problem was that lecturers needed space to consider the political side of their role and their involvement in such areas.

In support of this argument, research from Sheeran *et al.* (2007:253) informed how the 'widening participation' policy that came forth during 1998 with the paper '*Elitism to Inclusion',* encouraged HEIs to move from what had been seen as a 'discriminatory attitude on the part of [some] lecturers' to the making of reasonable adjustments to students with declared disabilities. The United Nations Convention on the rights of persons with disability (2006: Article 2) defined reasonable adjustment as the:

> Necessary and appropriate modification and adjustments not imposing a disproportionate or undue burden, where needed in a particular case, to ensure to persons with disabilities the enjoyment or exercise on an equal basis with others of all human rights and fundamental freedoms. (UNESCO 2006)

Following this the Equality Act (2010) according to the Department of Business Innovation and Skills (2014), enabled the funding available to students with disabilities' to rebalance through the use of the Disabled Students Allowance and institutional support. Smith (2010) informed that HEIs were obliged to provide an approach that built upon inclusive practice and to make reasonable adjustments (also see HEFCE (2017) Goode (2007) and also Van Bergeijk *et al*. (2008). The UN Convention on the rights of persons with disability (2006) in section 24 (5) informed that:

> States Parties shall ensure that persons with disabilities are able to access general tertiary education, vocational training, adult education and lifelong learning without discrimination and on an equal basis with others. To this end, States Parties shall ensure that reasonable accommodation is provided to persons with disabilities.

The HEFCE (2017:12) gives clear direction that ‘it is in [the HEIs] collective interest to manage reasonable adjustments’. They suggested there were benefits for managing such reasonable adjustments in terms of developing a more inclusive learning environment for all students. In addition to this ‘if a proactive and strategic approach to planning and leading was taken’, this could bring about a ‘more inclusive culture, and potentially, in the long term, cost and efficiency savings’. According to Gibson (2012), Pumfrey (2008) and Barrington (2004) although there were inclusive focussed policies in place within many HEIs, ‘few… had actually ‘embedded inclusive practice’ into the individual… programmes beyond pockets of good practice’ (HEFCE 2017:18). Thus, there were still difficulties where lecturers often found it difficult to make the necessary reasonable adjustments and to fully accept the rights of disabled students. This could be linked to the difficulties discussed above where lecturers felt constrained in their roles and which may have been a consequence of the audit culture (Allan 2010b).

Tinklin, Riddel and Wilson (2004:2) suggested that most ‘students [with disabilities] experienced barriers to accessing their education’ which related to the ‘physical environment of teaching and learning. They suggested further that ‘adjustments to teaching practices were difficult to obtain…’ even though there were formal support plans and learning agreements in place to provide reasonable adjustments. It appeared students found themselves in the awkward position of having to ‘repeatedly […] ask for [adjustments], to no avail’. Tinklin *et al*. (2004:2) found some lecturers believed ‘adjustments to teaching practices would lower standards and give unfair advantage to disabled students’. This may hold some relevance to the current study in that the lecturers in Tinklin *et al’s* study appeared to be demonstrating different understandings of what equality meant, which was not reflected in the principles outlined in the equality legislation.

Smith’s (2010:212) research into inclusive practice and disability in HE explored the attitudes that lecturers had toward students with disabilities. She found most lecturers believed in the ‘principle of providing equitable education to students with disabilities’, and that the majority of lecturers were open to ‘learning how to deliver inclusive practice’. Allan (2010a:609) agreed

suggesting the main issue was that lecturers ‘lacked confidence in their capacity [to manage] with existing resources’. She found the majority of lecturers were positive about inclusion, as long as it did not involve complex needs. However, lecturers needed to be in a position to be able to be able to open up to the ‘other’ and respond confidently. According to Allan (2010a:612) this involved training and where possible, lecturers needed to engage in the ‘political subjectivities’ of inclusion in order to ‘re-examine’ and ‘rethink through issues’ within the classroom.

According to Myers and Newman (2014) inclusive policy should have been the driving practice in HE in order to create inclusive environments and should be essential for all learners in HE. They suggested lecturers needed to ‘understand the students themselves’ (Myers *et al.* 2014:11) which was what Shakespeare (2004) was alluding to when he talked about a social model of embodiment and meeting individual needs (Section 2.6). The stance taken by Gibson (2012:353) was to educate HE lecturers as to ‘the need… to show greater understanding and awareness of the ‘lived experiences’ of disabled students. Such awareness, according to Liasidou (2012) would enable lecturers to better understand how to deal with difference and diversity and manage the needs of those who may have previously felt excluded due to a disability.

Statistics from HESA (2016), suggested HE could expect a rise in numbers of students, who would have disclosed disabilities and be receiving Disabled Students Allowance (DSA) in order to be successful on their courses. The DBIS (2014:18) informed that disabled students when supported by the DSA, often outperformed students who were not disabled and further suggested that disabled students who had disclosed their disability were more likely to continue in their studies. On the other hand, the HEFCE (2016) informed that disabled students may also be more likely to drop out of their studies at the end of stage one. This would depend on whether the student had disclosed their disability and whether the appropriate support had been put into place. An update in 2017 from HEFCE suggested the cuts to the DSA, that had traditionally supported individual learner needs, would impact upon students in terms of the type of support they would receive. This meant HEIs would be expected to take a greater role in fulfilling their duty towards disabled

students. This also meant HEIs would need to develop a more ‘strategic and flexible approach to delivering inclusive practice’ (HEFCE 2017:11). In addition to this, the HEFCE (2017:23) asserted that HEIs would be expected to have ‘planned for and be able to provide approaches’ that met the needs of students, ‘which would have previously have been met by the DSA’.

2.6 The conceptual basis for hidden disabilities

A hidden disability according to Fuller, Healey, Bradley and Hall (2004a) was a disability usually diagnosed by a qualified professional, which could often have an impact on learning. They suggested a hidden disability included a range of learning difficulties such as Dyslexia, Dyspraxia, Asperger’s Syndrome, Depression, Anxiety and Epilepsy. The term hidden disability derived from the idea that hidden or ‘unseen’ disabilities… were part of the process of quantifying the presence of disabled people in HE’ (Waterford, West and Chalkley, 2006:45). The system used by the University and Colleges Admissions System (UCAS) recorded hidden disability as ‘a disability that could not be seen’ (Waterford *et al.* 2006:45). Although hidden disability was also included as part of the disclosure process on the application for a HE course, hidden disability had often been viewed as a difficult concept to explain. This was due to its complex and subjective nature. Such complexity in conceptualising disability created challenges to the study because some students choose not to disclose their disability, or may have been experiencing disability in a different way to others with the same or a similar disability. This contributed towards one of the limitations in the study as discussed in section 5.5.

The term disability, whether hidden or not, was still a debated concept although a definition was given in the Equality Act (2010 Part one, Section 6:4) which stated that a person was disabled if they:

> Have a physical or mental impairment that has a ‘substantial’ and ‘long-term’ negative effect on [their] ability to do normal daily activities.

The Equality Act (2010) explained disability (hidden or not) may fall into one of the following areas:

- a long term health condition
- a mental health condition
- a specific learning difficulty (such as dyslexia or dyspraxia).

(adapted from the Equality Act 2010 Part 2, chapter 1 page 4)

The DBIS (2014:20) informed that 47% of disabled students tended to be identified with dyslexia, with 1 in 10 (10.2%) presenting with a longstanding heath issue and 1 in 10 (9.5%) with a mental health issue. For this reason the DBIS suggested HEIs needed to take notice and emphasise the importance and need for inclusive teaching. Fuller *et al. (*2004a) suggested a hidden disability was not necessarily noticed or recognised within a social situation such as a classroom; however, a review of the literature (Madriaga *et al*. 2011; VanBergeijk *et al.* 2008; Konur 2006; Avramidis and Skidmore 2004) revealed that a hidden disability may impact upon the learning ability of an learner due to characteristics such as moods, fatigue, short term memory difficulties or anxiety. Such characteristics may have complex factors attached to them and place students at a disadvantage if the lecturer was unaware or unwilling to make reasonable adjustments. Such adjustments were needed to ensure the disabled learners could access the course and assessment at the same level as those students without disabilities (Madriaga *et al.* 2011).

As this study was exploring disabled students' perceptions of their support in HE, the next section provides a review of the models of disability that have attempted to provide some levels of inclusive practice.

2.7 The medical and social models of disability

The models of disability have arisen from social constructionist perspectives on disability with the majority emerging from the field of disability studies (Anastasiou and Kauffman 2011). The two most frequently discussed being the 'medical' and 'social' models of disability.

According to Chapman (2008) the medical model or Individual model of disability reinforced the idea that the issues disabled students in HE experienced were a direct result of their own health or impairment. Houghton (2005) suggested the medical model of disability focused on the individual's medical condition or impairment and attributed the difficulties experienced by disabled people to be located within the individual. According to Barnes and Mercer (2010:26) the medical model of disability followed on from the individual model of disability by suggesting the disabled person was 'largely inert: acted upon rather than active'. This involved 'conceptualising disability as an individual health issue' where:

> Disabled people [were] socially imagined and may imagine themselves as, among other things, damaged, abnormal, as patients and/or as the dependent objects for a variety of medical or rehabilitative interventions. (Albert 2004:2)

Slee (2008:99) agreed and suggested disabled people were socially constructed by the medical model through discourses that limited an understanding of disability and which 'reduced people to a set of characteristics, typically seen as defects'. Houghton (2005) explained that the medical model was seen to assume that if the necessary 'treatment' or 'support' was put into place, the disabled individual would be able to overcome their limitations. It was, however, this type of thinking that the disabled peoples' organisations were seeking to eradicate. Oliver (2010), a key proponent of the British social model, argued that many of the barriers faced by disabled people were environmental and societal rather than medical. He suggested the characteristics or impairments experienced by disabled people were only disabling because of the way society responded to them (Oliver 2010). This meant the barriers to learning were found 'within the environment, not within the individual' (Peer and Reid 2012:52). Peer and Reid (2012) suggested many professionals were still strongly influenced by the medical model, which it could be argued was still necessary in terms of identifying a disability and obtaining the necessary funding and provision (Anastasiou and Kauffman 2013). According to Hodkinson and Vickerman (2009:16) the medical model was the result of 'society's actions, values and beliefs that often enforced social marginalisation upon minority groups'. They suggested it was 'the environment that disabled people', due to its limited

opportunities to enable people ‘to communicate and function’ as well or as ‘effectively as people without impairments’.

As a precursor to the debates around the social model of disability, Shakespeare and Watson (2002:32) claimed it was ‘society that disabled… people’ and that disability was ‘imposed on top of… impairments’. This meant disabled people could be ‘unnecessarily isolated and excluded from full participation in society’ (Anastasious and Kauffman 2013:462) Shakespeare and Watson (2002:32) discussed the difference between having an impairment and being disabled and that it was the ‘social situation that was referred to as the ‘disability’ of people with such impairment’. Barnes (1991:2) suggested impairment was the ‘functional limitation’ caused by the ‘physical, mental or sensory impairment’ and the ‘loss or limitation of opportunity to take part in normal life… on an equal level with others’. Fuller (2008:3) reminded that too often a person with an impairment was ‘labelled as disabled’ when they may not be disabled at all. It was the social situation that disabled the person with the impairment, not the impairment itself.

Understanding the differences between the medical and social model was essential within the field of education with the recognition that the social model placed the onus of supportive provision on society rather than expecting the individual to adapt to the environment. According to Houghton (2005:3) the medical model referred to the ‘individual condition’ and the impact the condition or disability had on the learner. The social model of disability was seen as ‘a result of physical, environmental, legal, cultural, and attitudinal barriers experienced by a person with an impairment’ (Houghton 2005:3).

Albert’s (2004:4) view of the social model suggested ‘disabled people should be actors in their own lives, rather than passive recipients of care’. He believed disabled people should be given the opportunity to ‘define and control their own lives’ rather than feeling ‘powerless’ in a learning situation, as they tried to adapt to an environment that did not appear to understand their needs. According to Barer (2007) the social model of disability should encourage more ‘cooperative problem-solving’ and a focus on ‘making and

changing attitudes'. This should avoid the dominant perception that disability was the personal inadequacy' of a disabled person and to recognise that 'disability [was] caused by environmental and institutional barriers (Beauchamp-Pryor 2012:255) Smith (2010:213) suggested the reactions of staff may have often appeared to demonstrate a medical model view of disabled students especially when the lecturers did not know 'what [was] legally required of them' or 'what inclusive practice actually [involved]'.

The disability movement that had been set up by disabled people in the first place, had been highly critical of the provision offered by academics in HE, recognising that earlier studies into learning in HE had not necessarily conferred with disabled students (Good 2007). The disability movement according to Good (2007:35) claimed professionals expected disabled students to 'subject themselves passively and willingly to professionals' treatment' and accept 'what is on offer' (Beauchamp-Pryor 2012b:255).

This related to Pumfrey's (2008) suggestion that some lecturers in HE believed disabled students may not have been able to reach the levels of understanding required for HE learning, assuming that 'disabled people were inadequate' (Beauchamp-Pryor 2012b:255). Hodkinson and Vickerman (2009:23) viewed this as the ideology of a society that had not understood the perspective of a disabled student. They suggested the social model was built upon principles and that it was likely to be 'society and its attitudes, values and beliefs' that caused the disability rather than the medical impairments the person was diagnosed with. It was easy to assume the social model of disability was the answer to enabling disabled students within an educational setting. It could also be assumed that the social model was society's way of ensuring barriers to learning were managed well for students and that by following the concepts outlined in the social model, all would be well for disabled students. On the contrary, Shakespeare (2006:9) suggested the social model was 'dogmatic in its approach', and that 'it relied on an overly narrow flawed conception of disability'. Shakespeare and Watson (2002:3) claimed the social model was given academic credibility through 'the work of Finkelstein (1980, 1981), and Barnes (1991) and Oliver (1990, 1996)' and that:

> The social model [had] now become the ideological litmus test of disability politics in Britain, used by the disabled people's movement to distinguish between organisations, policies, laws and ideas which are progressive, and those which are inadequate. (Shakespeare and Watson 2002:3)

One of the reasons for critiquing the social model according to Flood (2005:182), was that the social model was originally supposed to 'remove disabled people from the de-humanising effects of the traditional and invalidating medical and charity model'. The social model had been seen to provide a base to enable policy and theory and 'to explain [the] experience of exclusion, discrimination and oppression' of people with disabilities (Flood 2005:182). According to Barnes and Mercer (2010), the social model had not addressed the everyday experiences of disabled people because, as Shakespeare (2004:9) explained, the social model had risen out of the 'big idea of the disability movement' and become a 'political tool' due to its simple, direct and effective' application. It was such simplicity that contributed to one of the main flaws within the social model because disability was not simple. Allan (2010a:606) suggested the social model was a political intervention that had not been changed in 30 years and needed to be 'more sophisticated and refined'. It was important to recognise that disability involved a complex field of 'physical and mental difficulties as well as social barriers due to exclusion' (Shakespeare 2004:13). Although it was recognised the social model was never expected to explain everything or provide all the answers, it had become a:

> Victim of its own robust coherence because it has avoided engagement with personal issues. The social model could be considered to be ideologically dominant in nature as its activists have sought to move away from the notion of victims who are 'flawed and frail. (Shakespeare 2004:9)

Shakespeare (2004) recommended a social theory of embodiment that considered personal need and experiences as being necessary if society was to move forward from the simplistic social model as it stood. According to Allan (2010a:604) disability had been seen as 'area of contestation where the removal of the body from the social model [had been] seen'. It was

recognised also by Allan (2010a) that there had been a noticeable disappearance of the 'other' from Education practice and policy. Swain *et al.*(2003) suggested the aim of the social model should be to provide some understanding of the difficulties experienced by disabled people and where appropriate, use the social model as 'a basis for… explanation'. Furthermore, Swain *et al*. claimed the social model should be used to draw attention to the real problems and barriers faced by disabled people and include reference to the patronising attitudes disabled people were often faced with; and the limited options left available to them (Swain *et al.* 2003). Such conceptualisations will be of relevance to this study.

So far this review of inclusive practice in HE has considered some of the definitions around inclusion and suggested that in attempting to define inclusion there is a complexity in thinking and contention as to what inclusion really is. The historical basis of equality policy demonstrated a breadth in knowledge and understanding around inclusion, however, there were still difficulties within society and in particular within HE to fully engage in making connections between inclusion, equality policy and the implementation of a true social model of disability that embraced the individual needs of disabled students. Now that the history of inclusive practice and the onset of the medical and social model have been discussed, the review considers aspects connected to the role of lecturers and some of the difficulties they may encounter as they approach inclusive practice.

2.8 The role of lecturers towards change in inclusive practice

Fuller, Heath, Bradley and Hall (2005) suggested disabled students were likely to encounter significant barriers to their learning in HE classrooms, which often impacted upon their progression and achievement. The realisation of the worth and value of the individual student, with or without a disability should be an essential element in the mind-set of the lecturer. The many responsibilities of the lecturer both inside and out the classroom could cause some resistance in terms of changing current teaching and assessment practices due to the audit culture found in HE (Allan 2010a;

Cruickshank 2016) (see section 2.4). Coare and Houghton (2008:1) suggested the role of the lecturer involved engaging with:

> External policy and legislation which shaped the institutional context… with further challenges facing adult educators [that] related to the administrative and pedagogical/ course issues and the subsequent development of an inclusive learning experience for all learners. (Coare and Houghton 2008:1)

Such pressures of adopting both external and internal policies as well as ensuring they were engaged in research, continuing professional development and the leadership of programmes were found to be among the main duties of the lecturer. Lecturers were also expected to teach and deliver high quality research as well as following all quality assurance procedures, generating income and managing the needs of 'increasing student numbers and diversity within the student body' (Coare and Houghton 2008:2). This work was being undertaken by lecturers during a time when HE was (and still is) experiencing cuts in funding for student support under the control of neo-liberalist market forces and employability drives. This included the maintenance grant in 2016 and cuts towards the Disabled Students Allowance in 2016 (Willets, 2014). In terms of the changes to the DSA the expected changes were that:

> Universities rather than the government [would be] responsible for funding the provision of non-medical staff, such as scribes, note takers, readers and proof readers. More specialist roles such as sign language interpreters [would] still be funded using DSAs. (Havergal 2015:2)

The reduction in funding and support from the government suggested universities would be expected to fund the main support for disabled students. Lecturers were not mentioned in this statement, however, there were likely to be more pressures on universal provision to ensure all students had equal opportunities to learn and progress. The support staff in Student Wellbeing would be put under more pressure to discern needs and allocate the funding provided to those students who really needed it. Although the DBIS (2014) informed funding would be in place for students with a more severe disability, it was still under discussion in terms of amounts and who

was expected to do what. The focus university and their support teams were aware cuts in funding had been delayed until 2016/17 (Havergal 2015:2) and had seen this as a time to plan and prepare for the changes and equip the support team and lecturers accordingly.

2.9 Lecturer awareness and understanding of disability

It was clear HEIs were managing an increase in students with disabilities applying to courses (Beauchamp-Pryor 2012b; Gibson 2012; HEA, 2011; Madriaga *et al.* 2011; VanBergeijk 2008). The same literature also stated that HEIs were expected to establish the needs of such students and implement reasonable adjustments within their teaching, learning, course and assessment methods. This was done in order to ensure all students whether they have a disability or not, had the opportunity to experience success in HE and achieve their full potential (Pumprey 2008). Guidelines on course design from HEA (2011) and Morgan and Houghton (2011) advised HE courses needed to ensure inclusion and accessibility for all students and foster a deep approach to learning. It was also important to ensure there were regular quality reviews of all approaches to learning, teaching and assessment. This was so that provision was found to be effective and continued to sustain the high academic standards underpinning those expected in HE (HEA 2011).

It was important to note that academic standards in assessments were not negotiable, all courses and assessments were put under scrutiny and validated following the guidelines laid down by the Quality Assurance Agency (QAA 2012). The course and how it was designed, presented and assessed, however, needed to be flexible to ensure inclusivity (VanBergeijk *et al.* 2008). This meant ensuring the quality guidelines had been followed, and that any modifications were checked by quality officials where necessary in order to enhance the learning experiences of students who had given feedback on their learning experiences.

In 2005 the Disability Rights Commission (DRC 2005) (now referred to as the Equality and Human Rights Commission) included in their legislation the necessity to anticipate and make reasonable adjustments to course design

rather than making changes according to each student's need. They suggested that ad hoc, reactive adjustment was often too late to be meaningful for disabled students (HEA 2011) which related to the 'bolt-on methods found and discussed by the Beattie report (1999). Historically, HEFCE (1999: section 16) had suggested there was already a good deal of activity within HE to support disabled students. The problem appeared to be that there were different ways of managing disability across institutions and a 'general absence of monitoring and evaluation to assess the quality and impact of support' to disabled students. HEFCE (1999:Section16) outlined how some institutions had struggled to manage disability issues 'with enthusiasm' although some lecturers had tried to assist disabled students in a caring way. A failing had been that the policies within different institutions had not reflected the enthusiasm or commitment to inclusive practice which meant the 'picture [of inclusive practice] was still patchy' and disability could still be seen as a barrier in HE (section 22). Although the thinking behind neo-liberalism and its dominant views around the importance of employability (Burke 2012) did not support inclusion as such; there was still a strong argument for inclusion. This involved the enablement of disabled people in order that they could be 'better equipped to make a productive contribution to society (section 26). For this reason the HEFCE (1999: Section 80) recommended Disabled Students Allowance (DSA) be used to provide base-level provision which was regarded as the 'minimum levels of service' expected in HE. The provision was to include personal assistance, note takers and IT equipment (Section 63). The objective of the minimum levels of service being to encourage HEIs to 'adopt a more robust and positive attitude towards access for disabled people' (Section 81) which would then enable their participation. This would also support lecturers in the classroom who were struggling to include such students.

Prior to 2001, according to Beauchamp-Pryor 2012b:262), 'there was no legal recourse for disabled people in HE'. However, the Special Educational Needs and Disability Act (SENDA) (2001) made it unlawful to discriminate against disabled people or treat them less favourably than none disabled students. The SENDA (2001) requested that reasonable steps be put into place to prevent any disadvantage and would include changes to policies and

practices and changes to course requirements of work placement. In addition to this, changes may need to be made to the access of buildings. Further changes might include the provision of interpreters and support workers along with alternative ways of delivery courses. This final point could be difficult for some lecturers, but could be achieved when planned well ahead. As mentioned earlier, this should not be left to ad-hoc reactive bolt on methods, that were often time consuming for the lecturers, and not effective for the students (Beattie Report 1999).

Interestingly the HEFCE (2009:xii) reported there were still a number of areas of improvement needed in HE. These involved the need to:

> 'access dedicated resources and related issues around assessment and disclosure'; the limited involvement of disabled students; problems with continuity of funding; difficulties over physical access needs; problems in teaching and learning; gaps in staff training; uncertain support from above (central management, etc.); and limitations in external support and monitoring. (HEFCE 2009:xii)

It will be interesting to observe whether this links to the data in the findings.

Van Bergeijk *et al.* (2008:1364) reminded that on the one hand, without a disclosure there was probably no eligibility for the lecturer to make any reasonable teaching adjustments, however, once a student had disclosed their disability and a Study Needs Assessment had taken place, there was an eligibility for 'mandatory accommodation within the classroom'. The DRC (2007:128) suggested lecturers needed to 'anticipate the needs of disabled students, regardless of whether or not they knew whether they had disabled students in their classes'. In relation to this, Boyd (2014:379) revealed a 'key feature of recent disability-related legislation had put measures in place to ensure lecturers anticipated needs as required'. The implications were that lecturers needed to develop a deeper understanding of what it meant to be a learner with a learning disability. This was so they could identify which networks to call upon for training, and support students if and when they did disclose a disability (DRC 2007).

In Martin's (2006:3) research into the increasing numbers of students with disabilities, they found teaching staff were able to recognise potential characteristics of disability, although the students had not at that time disclosed them. Martin's (2006) research suggested that although HE staff may have been aware of disabilities, they did not necessarily know how to manage or make the reasonable adjustments needed to manage the effective learning of such students. Martin (2006:3) suggested it was the 'not knowing' that caused much of the anxiety and feelings of inadequacy amongst teaching staff. In support of this, Abbott (2006:630) found lecturers often felt 'ill equipped to meet the wide range of learning difficulties' they were faced with and found there were 'negative feelings' and a 'sense of fear' about how to manage students with certain characteristics.

The Quality Assurance Agency (QAA) (2009:10) advised that making reasonable adjustments for disabled students should not be considered as an additional service to the university programme but as a 'core element of the overall service the institution makes available'. This relates to what the DRC (2005) were referring to in terms of anticipating needs. Furthermore the QAA (2009) informed staff were likely to need support in terms of advice and resources to ensure course design met the requirements of the institution and the needs of students. The HE Academy (HEA) (2010:29) referring to the Post 16 Code of Practice (DRC 2007) suggested staff needed to be trained to manage disability and wherever possible, courses and teaching practices, including lectures, should be designed to be accessible.

Fuller, Healey, Bradely and Hall (2005) presented a persuasive account of how HEIs were starting to demonstrate greater understanding of their responsibility towards managing reasonable adjustments for disabled students. They claimed such responsibilities needed to extend beyond the limits of student services and into the teaching force, thus ensuring staff were educated around what inclusive practice was. Gosling (2009:127) suggested HEIs needed to embed a culture 'which valued equality and diversity' and was prepared to set aside neoliberalist views and integrate thinking about disability as a standard procedure by all staff.

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Findings from Fuller (2008:3) also suggested the development of an inclusive course was key to making the reasonable adjustments suggested by the Equality Act (2010), not just for disabled students, but rather for all students. Fuller (2008) suggested that:

> Wherever possible the environment for teaching, learning and assessment should be designed so that disabled students do not face barriers and become disabled by their environment. This would circumvent the problem of students having to disclose a disability in order to obtain additional support, which was resented by many who did not feel comfortable with being labelled as disabled. However, it was recognised that some students would always require very specific individual adjustments. (Fuller 2008:3)

The challenge here was that there was a need for effective inclusive provision that provided universal design for learning with additional intervention as needed. There would always be students who needed more (or less) support than had been accounted for. This revealed the complex and contradictory space the teaching and learning practice in HE fell within. The reality and complexity of learning difficulty was such that it was often difficult to get the right level of support for the disabled student. This was a reason why student agency and ownership was an important factor to bring into the discussion. The disclosure and identification of a disability may be helpful for some students, but could also be problematic for others. It appeared as though the whole system for gaining funding was predicated on the need for a label, which according to Norwich (2007) meant disabled students needed to be placed in the deficit of a negative connotation to receive the support they needed. In HEFCE's (2009xvii) review of reasonable adjustments for disabled students in HE provision, they found there could be no guarantee of students 'accessing the support to which they [were entitled']. They suggested this was often due to 'unrecognised and unmet needs' amongst students. Although much support was in place for students who needed it, there were still students who were likely to 'fall through the gaps' of provision. It was thought that this may be due to poor planning by lecturers, delays in funding, 'lack of continuity, poor staff awareness, access problems, and shortfalls in resources'. However, this could also be due to those undisclosed disabilities in students who chose not to be labelled.

The HEA (2011) and also Morgan and Houghton (2011) suggested an inclusive course would be best achieved by placing the work of individual course design within a context of change to policies and procedure across the institution. This was so that the responsibility for inclusion was placed into the hands of the entire sector to respond to the imperatives placed on HEIs and their staff equality legislation (Allan 2010a). This would also promote equity of access and embed inclusive policy and practice within HE. According to Waterford *et al*. (2006) there still remained inconsistency between policy and practice in terms of addressing disability across the sector. They suggested most HE institutions had policies in place and had considered course design and organised teaching and learning strategies accordingly. This was so they could ensure provision for disabled students. There were, however, 'often disparities in provision and practice within and between institutions and disciplines' (Waterford *et al.* 2006:3). Comparing the above discussion with the inclusion definition adopted by this study from the Salamanca Framework (UNESCO 1994), it would appear HEIs were trying to implement equality policies but had not considered the individual needs of disabled students in enough depth.

The review of literature had demonstrated much evidence of commitment to reasonable adjustment with support from legislation. It was evident research had delivered evidence of the unsatisfactory experience of 'support' among students and revealed the dangers of being identified in a context where individual practitioners may not have had the skills, attitudes or understanding to manage inclusion. It also appeared that 'identification' and 'support' were not always delivering the equal opportunities they should. This study seeks to cast further light on the actual experiences of students within a policy context, suggesting equality for all, although practice often falls short of this (Martin 2006). Where solutions to this problem have been addressed, it has often been from the perspective of pedagogic design which the next section in this review will address.

2.10 Inclusive pedagogy, connective pedagogy and a universal design for learning (UDL)

As this study was exploring the lived experiences of disabled students in HE, which included experiences in the classroom, it was essential to consider the literature's stance on inclusive classroom practice. There appeared to be numerous forms of terminology referring to inclusive teaching where each had similar meanings or ran parallel to one another.

Inclusive pedagogy or the 'inclusive pedagogical approaches, according to Le Roux and Graham (1998), Florian and Linklater (2010), and Florian and Black-Hawkins (2011), were thought to include teaching approaches that were merged into a system that addressed the learning of all learners in the classroom. It was suggested that such an approach accommodated a range of needs and was likely to have been planned during the design of the course. Florian and Linklater (2010:370) suggested inclusive pedagogy focused on the extension of what was already in place in terms of materials and delivery styles, and responded to the differences between learners rather than 'specifically individualising for some' learners. Florian and Linklater (2010) informed of a 'shift' from the traditional directive delivery of information, once found to be the most common form of delivering information in HE (Long, Wood, Littleton, Passenger and Sheehy 2011). This moved to thinking about using teaching methods that worked for most learners with some add on support methods for students experiencing learning difficulties. By thinking through the process of what was needed for a range of learners the learning environment could become the:

> Creation of a rich learning environment characterised by lessons and learning opportunities that are sufficiently made available to everyone so that all are able to participate in classroom. (Florian and Linklater 2010:370)

From this perspective, inclusive pedagogy was understood to be a method of teaching that shifted the thinking from providing for 'most' and 'some' learners to 'all' learners. Corbett (2001:56) used the term 'connective pedagogy' as a parallel term to inclusive pedagogy, suggesting connective pedagogy was a 'form of teaching which opened up creative possibilities to learn' and which

involved ‘all learners’ being able to ‘draw upon many ways of teaching’. Whilst both Le Roux and Graham (1998) and Corbett (2001) referred to the importance of reasonable adjustment strategies, they differed in that Le Roux and Graham (1998) viewed inclusive teaching as part of the course design, whilst Corbett (2001:56) viewed inclusive, or connective pedagogy as ‘creative opportunities’ to enable the differentiation of teaching styles. With such varying views of what inclusive teaching was, the confusion found amongst lecturers regarding what inclusive practice was and how to implement it (Martin 2006) was not surprising.

According to Smith (2010) the majority of lecturers in HE used a wide range of skills developed from working and training in a range of organisations to support their teaching. This included skills developed from research, teaching in schools, colleges and HE. Such experience enabled lecturers to ensure they felt confident and committed in their communication and sought the best for their students’ learning. This may have meant the majority of lecturers assumed they were already using inclusive pedagogy in their teaching because of past experience.

Gargiulo and Metcalf (2010:8) gave their definition to inclusive teaching in the form of a programme called Universal Design for Learning (UDL). Liasidou (2014:127) pointed out that UDL could be used to ‘improve teaching and learning’ and ‘enhance accessibility’ for a variety of students presenting race, ethnic and other areas of difference… such as disability. Furthermore, the National Centre on Universal Design for Learning (2014) informed that UDL was a ‘set of principles for course development that [provided] all individuals [with] an equal opportunity to learn’. However, this did not include ‘a single fool-proof course’, but involved planning ‘multiple approaches to a topic’ and a ‘variety of resources to accommodate a wide range of individual preferences and abilities’ (Westwood 2013:35); and is not limited to a specific group (Liasidou 2014).

The principles involved in UDL revolved around the ‘what’ ‘how’ and ‘why’ of learning and sought to provide more flexibility in the way courses were taught and assessed.

The three principles of Universal Design for Learning

Principle 1 Provide multiple means of Representation	**Principle 2 Provide multiple means of action and expression**	**Principle 3 Provide multiple means of engagement**
Perception	Physical action	Recruiting interest
Language, expression and symbols	Expression and communication	Sustaining effort and persistence
Comprehension	Executive function	Self-regulation

Table two - Adapted from the UDL website (2014)

The first principle of UDL involved lecturers being aware that learners were likely to differ in the ways they perceived or understood information. It was thought a lecturer was likely to be faced with students sharing a range of disabilities including cognitive, sensory based difficulties, dyslexia, or sight and hearing difficulties. Student learning would need to be addressed in different ways with recognition that each student would 'receive and interpret the information' differently (Gargiulo and Metcalf 2012:42). The different types of representation used to deliver information may have included PowerPoints, video clips, recordings or accompanying notes, readings and assistive technology and so variation was essential (Hayden, 2006). The UDL website (2017) suggested it was unlikely there would be only one way of teaching that would be 'optimal for all learners'. In addition to this, Liasidou (2014:128) informed UDL could provide a 'proactive rather than reactive approach' to meeting student needs across disciplines and environments. Thus, providing provision for all students who could 'choose their own best way of learning' and reduce some of the physical barriers often experienced in classrooms (Gargiulo and Metcalf 2012:42).

The second principle of UDL involved an understanding that each student needed to be able to express themselves and would need encouragement to respond to information and participate in different ways. Gargiulo and Metcalf (2012:46) informed of the multiple types of learners and their different

personality and individual differences and needs. They suggested some students would respond well to discussions in class, however, some students may rarely speak due to shyness. Some students may have needed more time to process information, whilst others may have needed direction to help them respond. Providing different means for students to express themselves, meant lecturers could reduce barriers to learning and allow students to self-regulate; and in time gain 'ownership' over their learning. Using areas of strength and recognising different learning preferences could also support students in engaging in more meaningful learning experiences.

The third principle of UDL addressed the different ways students could engage in learning. It was suggested (UDL website 2017) that some learners may be 'highly motivated and enjoy spontaneity and novelty', whereas others may need a 'strict routine'. There needed to be an awareness that some students may 'prefer to work alone, while others… prefer to work with their peers'. According to Garguilo and Metcalf (2012:45) the information being delivered needed to 'boost [students'] interest' and 'be viewed as appealing and important 'to meeting student goals. Using activities such as debating, discussing, designing posters, props, developing games, could engage students more in their learning. Garguilo and Metcalf (2012:45) informed that most learners experienced some difficulty, frustration or anxiety during their education where they may lose interest, motivation and belief in self. By using a multiple means of engagement, lecturers could support students in becoming 'more confident, responsible and reflective learners'. In addition to this UDL could help to 'destabilise some of the power inequalities' found within HE classrooms in terms of how language was used and its effects on providing a space for all to contribute (Liasidou (2014:128).

To summarise, the UDL principles suggested that an understanding of different students' cognitive and social learning was essential to ensure each individual had an opportunity to access the course successfully. The idea each learner was likely to approach learning differently should be planned for through a range of lectures and activities. Although challenging in terms of planning initially for the lecturer, there were benefits for all students when such consideration of learning needs was taken into account.

According to Holbrook, Moore and Zoss (2010) and Pliner and Johnson (2004) the thinking behind UDL had appealed to educators in HE looking to create more meaningful and inclusive classrooms. They suggested the principles of UDL were adopted not only to consider classroom space, but to also allow lecturers to customise the delivery of instruction. This meant 'shortcomings in the curriculum could be addressed' and 'accessibility could be enhanced' (Liasidou 2014:128). Assessments could be adapted in order to enable students to demonstrate their understanding of the concepts being taught. Westwood (2013:35) added that UDL could accommodate learner differences 'without excluding any learners and without compromising academic standards. Although dated research, Silver, Bourke and Strehorn (1998:47) first considered the use of UDL in their own HEI with the premise that in such an inclusive environment, the students 'would not need to rely as heavily on support systems' in addition to their chosen course. The study found that although the participant lecturers wanted all of their students to do well and held high expectations of each student, they wanted to be responsive to all diverse learning needs' (Silver, Bourke and Strehorn 1998:49). This related to Corbett's (2001:56) connective pedagogy and her point on 'opening up creative possibilities to learn'. Silver *et al.* (1998) demonstrated that more interest in the ways the materials were delivered was important rather than just considering the planning of the actual course or the impact such teaching would have on students.

Wray (2002) agreed lecturers needed to be more involved in course design and suggested that consideration should be given not only to the course materials, but also to the assessment tasks being undertaken. In addition to this Liasidou (2014) suggested lecturers needed to consider how such design could enable students to interact and respond in 'accordance with students' preferred modes of learning'. Moreover Jacklin and Robinson (2007) found there were great benefits in building inclusive design, and using a range of assessment tasks which provided more opportunity for students to show their competence in a range of skills. However, according to the HEA (2010) whilst the adjustment of teaching approaches may have been appropriate; there still remained some difficulty in ensuring an inclusive approach was

understood and implemented during the planning and design of the course itself (also Le Roux and Graham, 1998; Holbrook *et al.* 2010). Such difficulties may have arisen on how to adjust the learning outcomes for a course or the aims of a session. This meant consideration was needed regarding the suitability of learning outcomes for all students. Pumfrey (2008) argued that teaching approaches in HE needed to meet the aims and learning outcomes of study according to course planning and the quality of the specifications set out by the university.

Holbrook *et al.* (2010) discussed how the inclusive classroom should also be a caring environment which appeared to be very different to the traditional HE environment of directive teaching and lecturing (Smith, 2010). Inclusive teaching was not supposed to dissuade students from managing their own learning, but instead provide an environment where they could access all aspects of the course in an equitable way. An example from Waterford *et al.* (2006) suggested some teaching styles may not meet the needs of individual learners with disabilities. They gave an example of a learner with dyslexia who struggled with registering and processing information. They explained that when lecturers delivered subject matter through written and verbal means and assessments through examinations, they could be failing a student with dyslexia. If the teaching was planned to be conducive for all students, it was possible to ensure no students were disabled by the environment.

Gibson (2012) offered a useful conceptualisation of inclusive pedagogy within the HE classroom where she introduced the concept of inclusive pedagogy as a dialogic approach. Gibson (2012) placed this approach within a sociocultural context, and argued that dialogues taking place in (and outside) of the classroom could enhance the environment through lecturers who listened, anticipated need and communicated with students. Kershner (2009:59) also referred to the use of dialogic pedagogy suggesting that student 'talk was at the heart of… thinking and learning'. Gibson (2012:364) was impressed with the 'connectedness' found between learners and lectures when dialogic pedagogy was used. She found students became friends and felt 'more secure' in 'asking questions' and shared their thinking in class. In

addition to this Hagenauer. and Volet (2016) suggested the quality of lecturer and student interactions both inside and outside of the classroom could be vastly improved and the quality of the student and lecturer relationship could enable students to feel more connected to their course and the university.

The uses of dialogic activities during class were found to be a more powerful use of teaching and learning by Kershner (2009). Kershner who referred to the psychological views of Vygotsky (1978) and ways language and thought could support learners in reaching a higher status of thinking. In addition to this Kershner (2009:59) suggested the role of the lecturer was to 'draw out and support [students] in their talk' by using techniques to help them express and develop their ideas. As lecturers used such techniques, students were encouraged to articulate their views and develop their arguments, thus building confidence and engagement in the classroom. Such techniques could according to Gibbs and Tang (2007:94), heighten the 'physiological arousal in the brain' and 'increase… alertness' and work to make… academic performance 'more efficient' and more independent.

When considering the conceptualisations of inclusive pedagogy offered by Gibbs and Tang (2007) and Gibson (2012) it was possible to see how disabled students and lecturers could work together to support independent learning in the classroom. This developing independence in learning was important because it enabled students to develop their own strategies for learning (Gibson 2012). It also meant students could learn to discern for themselves what they needed to do in order to achieve well. Furthermore, there was potential to encourage disabled students to move away from a dependence on the system for support because they were more able to negotiate reasonable adjustments or strategies for themselves. This is useful information for this study which if applied could make a big difference in the learning of students in the focus university.

Waterford *et al.* (2006) suggested lecturers needed to be reflecting on their teaching practice and consider their teachings styles, course materials and the assessment tasks they used. They suggested lecturers needed to consider how they might adjust their teaching in order to demonstrate a 'level

playing field' for students with disabilities. In addition to this, an emphasis should be placed on the 'parity of [student] experience through embedded, consistent practice rather than 'bolt on' or 'ad hoc provision' suggested in the Beattie Report (1999) and to take time to listen to what the students were saying about their experiences in the classroom. This related to the aims of the study which was to explore disabled students' experiences of learning in HE. It will be interesting to see how these insights are played out in the focus university.

2.11 Assistive technology as a reasonable adjustment in learning and teaching

A reasonable adjustment found in many HE classrooms involved assistive technology. The Association for HE Access and Disability (2017) informed assistive technology involved a wide range of resources to support disabled students and could be as simple as providing a magnifying glass for a student with a visual impairment, to a smartphone calendar application to support students with their organisation. According to Lersilp (2016) assistive technology was used by disabled students on their own or with assistance. The types of technology included were:

> Touch control devices, alternative keyboards and mouse, speech-to-text word recognition tools, word prediction programs, word processors, grammar checkers, scanners, compact disc recording drives, and spell checkers. (Lerslip 2016:1)

Lersilp (2016) explained assistive technology was also referred to as assistive 'devices'. It was important to recognise that the Student Wellbeing Service was also viewed as a type of assistive technology in the way they assisted disabled students and that support could have included internal or external agencies (HEFCE 2016).The main purposes of assistive technology according to Gargiulo and Metcalf (2012:326) was to firstly enhance students' individual strengths in order that their 'abilities counterbalanced the effort of any disability'. The second purpose was to provide an alternative mode of performing a task so that the disability was compensated for or bypassed entirely. Alnahdi's (2014:18) research into assistive technology in HE suggested that:

> ‘Many technological tools can be put into place in order to increase as much as possible, the possibilities for students with disabilities to overcome… challenges…’. (Alnahdi 2014:18)

A concern noted by Avramidis and Skidmore (2004:75) was that the use of assistive technology was found to be ‘uncommon’ in their university both by students and the lecturers, to assist in learning and teaching. Lai (2011:1266) agreed claiming HE appeared to have ‘been slow’ in taking full advantage of the available technology on offer for use in the classroom. They suggested that whilst HE institutions often used data projectors and computers linked to the Internet for teaching, the use of technology for personalised learning appeared to have been overlooked or avoided by some lecturers. This may be an area of relevance to explore further in the findings.

2.12 Disclosure of disability

According to the Equality Challenge Unit (2014) (ECU) the overall percentage of students who disclosed a disability and received disabled student allowance in the UK was 9.6%. These statistics align with the 8.5% (HESA 2016) of students disclosing a disability in the focus university. The statistics did not include those students who for whatever reason had not chosen to disclose a disability. Powell (2003) reported that HE institutions would need to review their courses and decide what reasonable adjustments would be needed to ensure disabled students could participate more fully.

This meant HE institutions had been expected to ensure a reasonable adjustment was in place for students who had disclosed a disability. Santuzzi, (2013) suggested the ‘decision about whether to disclose a disability [could] weigh heavily on an individual’, making social and work situations challenging. However, Barer (2007:34 suggested students should be under no obligation to ‘disclose’ their disability and explained that some students were often reluctant to disclose a disability. According to Matthews (2009) this was despite existing procedures encouraging students to make clear their particular learning needs; and with many students choosing not to

disclose a disability. Matthews (2009::232) emphasised that ‘people surviving in a disabling society [may] make strategic decisions about disclosure based on their previous experiences’. This could have been due to the range of attitudes they had already encountered throughout their education, particularly with the stigma involved.. This could according to Gosling (2003) often accompany a disclosure, which may include teasing, bullying or belittling attitudes from other students or staff. Some students may have decided they had managed well enough throughout their education and did not wish to seek for support. Santuzzi (2013:1) posited that students with ‘disabilities needed to feel protected from unfair discrimination and [feel] free to disclose. She suggested disclosure could ‘relieve the strain of hiding the condition’ and provide a social support network with others with similar conditions or experiences. Santuzzi (2013:1) emphasised the importance of disclosing a disability to ensure the student received the necessary ‘accommodations’ for their studies. By not disclosing their disability, it was thought the student could find staff were prejudiced and assumed the work they produced was linked to underachievement.

On the other hand the disclosure of a disability may not have necessarily led to the support the students were expecting (Barer 2007). The area of whether to disclose a disability or not disclosure was found to have been complex and Barer (2007:34) reported on a range of attitudes found in HE institutions. He explained that when students had disclosed a disability, ‘the information was not always well handled...’, or ‘information was sometimes not relayed to the right people’. He warned there may have been an ‘inappropriate sharing of information’ which could have caused embarrassment both to the student and the teaching staff involved. Such disclosure may have been undertaken by caring staff trying to be supportive, but which could have caused as mentioned above, both embarrassment and annoyance to the student, who may have felt they have been exposed. This was contrary to the Equality Act (2010) which emphasised the right of disabled students to be enabled within their studies. The implications of disclosure must therefore be addressed in order to ensure disabled students are provided with the support they are entitled to.

In terms of protecting students when they disclosed a disability, the Data Protection Act of 1998 (which is currently being updated), was clear in its classification of sensitive data. According to Waterford *et al.* (2006) staff should be encouraged to seek the student's permission before passing any information to other staff. Coare and Houghton (2008:4) discussed 'the decision and manner in which [students] chose to disclose [their disability] could be personal and for many [students]… a complex process'. This had implications for the study since it had the potential to provide a greater understanding of disabled students' decisions around disclosure.

2.13 Listening to the disabled student's voice

In terms of listening to the disabled student's voice, Seale (2010) explained most disabled students tended to remain relatively silent as they encountered what may appear to them to be a power relationship between themselves and the lecturer. Power relationships between lecturers and students may be referred to as asymmetries of power, as such power was thought to be held by the 'well-resourced elites' in order to 'disenfranchise' subordinates (Pantazidou and Gaventa 2016; Sidelinger, Bolen, Brandi, Frisby and McMullen 2012). Beauchamp-Pryor (2012a) suggested students who were experiencing asymmetries of power were highly likely to be afraid to complain to lecturers or student services when they felt excluded from class. Such fear according to Seal (2010; Vickerman and Blundell 2010), could cause students to experience anxiety and isolation which may also cause barriers to learning. Fuller et al. (2004:303), Holloway (2001), Clough and Nutbrown (2012) suggested that although there has been growing interest in inclusive practice within HE, the voices of disabled students have 'hardly been heard' (Fuller et al. 2004:303). This is interesting because HE had frequently sought the opinions of students through the National Students' Survey (NSS) (2016) for stage three undergraduate students and the Student Survey for stage one and two students. This had been done in order to ensure student satisfaction and 'provide fresh perspectives' on any changes needed (Richards and Armstrong, 2008:22).

HEFCE (2016) advised that the NSS 'gathered students' opinions on the

quality of their courses' with the purpose of informing the 'choices of prospective students'. In particular the NSS provided important information that assisted universities in 'enhancing student experience' and providing student views on design changes they would like to see (Liasidou (2014:128). Such feedback from students enabled lecturers to hear the student voice and hear of 'actual rather than perceived needs'. This feedback was thought to support lecturers and students in developing strategies that 'captured all learners' views' (Richards and Armstrong (2008:21). Seale (2010) reminded though, that although student voices were often sought and listened to, there was no guarantee that anything would change. Nind, Rix, Sheehy and Simmons (2005) suggested lecturers may not necessarily develop strategies to listen to students' voices, let alone hear what they were saying, which suggested a form of selective listening could be taking place. According to Richards and Armstrong (2008:21; Beauchamp-Pryor 2012a) some students found it difficult to express opinions that criticised their educational setting because they had learned to 'regard themselves as powerless'. Such students may have become accustomed to lowering their expectations, being satisfied with provision, whatever its shortcomings, and feeling 'afraid of jeopardizing what they did have through criticism' (Richards and Armstrong 2008:21). This was a concern addressed by Beauchamp-Pryor (2012a:286) who asserted that disabled students may not have been be 'properly consulted'. She believed there were 'powerful hegemonic discourses that could override and impede the inclusive processes; rather than keeping the student and their voice 'central' to proceedings' (Liasidou 2014:128).

This notion of 'powerlessness' in students suggested by Richards and Armstrong (2008:21) needed exploring as it evoked images of students needing help but being too afraid to ask for it (Beauchamp-Pryor 2012b). The idea of the lecturer wielding the power within the lecturer/student relationship had not, according to Gosling (2007:2) been 'explored to any large extent'. Cranton (2006:8) suggested power could be associated with a lecturer's formal position as the 'formal authority' who had 'control over resources, rewards, punishment, information and the environment'. Foucault (1982:219) wrote widely on power relationships and suggested such relationships tended to be 'jointly constructed', and were 'not just a commodity that some people

possessed and others did not'. Gosling (2007) lamented that the lecturer was likely to have a power 'assigned to [them] as 'expert' by virtue of his/her claim to superior knowledge'. This meant the power or for want of a better term, an 'authority' could be developed through expertise and respect rather than a controlling factor over a relationship. Rioux (2014:134) suggested lecturers tended to adopt a power and an expertise that compelled them to 'make decisions about what was in a person's best interest' which may not necessarily be agreed by the student. Referring to Foucault, Barnes (1998:83) defined power as a 'mode of action which [did] not act directly… on others' and which was 'exercised through individuals' and thus needed to be 'studied at an individual level'. Moreover Barnes (1998) suggested that what characterised power (or authority) within a relationship depended upon the power given by each individual to the other. This line of enquiry is built upon in the analysis in chapter four.

2.14 Independence –v- learned helplessness, otherness and the self-fulfilling prophecy

The ethos of studying in HE is thought to have involved independent learning and the development of becoming an autonomous learner who could manage their own directed learning activities (Lau, 2015; Fry *et al.* 2003). According to Richards and Armstrong (2008) some students, disabled and non-disabled, may experience difficulties causing them to feel anxious or suffer mental health issues which could dissuade independent learning. One such mental health issue considered was learned helplessness. Alderman (2008) defined learned helplessness as a feeling or a belief about the self in connection to feelings of hopelessness, related to situations in which a person felt out of control. Similarly, Shields (1997) referred to learned helplessness as a person's lack of confidence or control over an aspect of their environment. Reivich, Gilham, Chaplin and Seligman (2012:201) suggested if a student was depressed or anxious, they could start to 'over generalise the experience' and become more passive in other situations, 'which would have been considered to be more controllable'. Seligman (2006:137) suggested everyone was open to learned helplessness. Moreover 'when [a person] failed at something, [they could] become helpless and depressed at least

momentarily'. Consequently, a person who was feeling helpless may not initially act as quickly in this difficult situation as they might otherwise. Gargiulo and Metcalf (2012:216) gave an example where students 'may have relied on lecturers or peers more than necessary' to provide support for their disability. If the support was not put into place in the way the student expected, the student may have believed they could not cope and thus moved into a state of helplessness. Seligman (2006) suggested optimists tended to recover from feelings of helplessness immediately by picking themselves up and starting again. On the other hand, people who were pessimistic tended to become more depressed and could stay in a helpless state for a longer period of time. If this was the case, Seligman (2006) informed the person may not try again for weeks or even months, and even if they tried, the slightest new set back could throw them back into a helpless state again. This may be an interesting state of mind to relate to within the findings.

Another concept to be aware of was the self-fulfilling prophecy. Merton (1948) who coined the phrase, informed that a person who already had difficulties may convince themselves that they were likely to fail, and may be living out what he called a self-fulfilling prophecy. He suggested a self-fulfilling prophecy tended to take place when a student was convinced they were destined to fail. He informed that the 'initial fallacious anxiety [was] transformed into an entirely justified fear' and was 'the beginning [of] a false definition of the situation evoking a new behaviour which made the original false conception come true (Merton 1948:195).

The third concept that may impact a disabled student's independent learning was the notion of 'otherness'. Appelqvist-Schmidlechner, Wessman, Tuulio-Henriksson and Luoma (2016:39) defined 'otherness' as 'being or feeling different in appearance or character from what [was] familiar, expected, or generally accepted' in society. A disabled student may perceive themselves as being abnormal or different to their peers. This may cause behaviours of avoidance particularly in terms of disclosure of a disability or participation in class. Bauman (1990) informed how 'otherness' was connected to the way in which society established identity categories. He suggested that such social categories were part of the way people shaped their thoughts and developed

an identity for who they thought they were. Moreover, as people shaped their thinking they may develop ideas of similarity or difference to others which could become central to their sense of identity and social belonging (Beauchamp-Pryor 2012b). Harma, Gombert, and Roussey (2013:314) informed that even though the student may be 'socially, economically and politically integrated' they may continue to be 'assigned the identity of otherness' as long as disability was still used as a criteria to classify human beings. In relation to these points, this study was designed to make a contribution to understanding the difficulties experienced by disabled students in HE. It will be interesting to see how such thinking amongst disabled students was established in chapter four.

In summary, the key points arising in the literature related to the increasing numbers of disabled students entering HE (Madriaga *et al*. 2011). It would appear that whilst funding had been available from the Disabled Student Allowance (2016) to support students with disabilities, HE as a whole was still developing its strategies to widen participation to disabled students. A commitment to inclusion and inclusive practice had been firmly recommended, through government policies and the literature and could be seen as a much needed addition within HE classrooms. The challenge of inclusion was compounded by a wider educational debate concerning the nature of inclusive practice, including a discussion of the term's definition and associated language (Richards and Armstrong, 2008). Lecturers were found to have desires to be inclusive but were not necessarily aware of their responsibility to make reasonable adjustments (Equality Act 2010). Although the social model was applied in HE classrooms, Smith's (2010) research revealed disabled students were still feeling disadvantaged. Students were found to be fearful of approaching lecturers, often for fear of reprimand or labelling due to their disability (Beauchamp-Pryor 2012a). Flood (2005) suggested lecturers may not really understand the needs of disabled students and that a rethink regarding the interpretation of the social model of disability should occur in order to enable rather than disable students. The simplicity found within the concepts of the medical and social models of disability were now found to be unacceptable and did not as suggested by Shakespeare (2004) address the individual experiences of disabled people.

The concept that student voice was sought but may not have been heard was a concern. This study has sought to give a voice to disabled students and data collection processes were designed to harvest more nuanced accounts from disabled students (see chapter four).The idea of power relationships, learned helplessness, references to otherness and the self-fulfilling prophecy experienced by some students and the complexities of such was another concern. The literature had also identified some negativity around the idea of lecturers' attitudes towards inclusive practice and towards disabled students in HE. Overall, the complexity of 'inclusion' as a concept and a practice is acknowledged in the literature, but with a general leaning towards inclusion as the pursuit of human rights (Young and Quibell 2000). Rioux (2014:132) suggested 'education, rights and law [were] inextricably intertwined', and it would appear that it was debatable as to whether such rights were being upheld. According to Young and Quibell (2000748) rights could be discussed on 'many levels' however, they may not be 'strictly enforceable' which needed to be taken into account. With such human rights in mind, it was essential that a suitable methodology was chosen in order to ensure the student voice was heard and remained central to the study (Liasidou 2014:128). The research methodology was designed to cast more light on such phenomena in ways that could contribute to understanding practice.

The following chapter provides the methodological approach and research tools for the study.

Chapter 3 Methodology

3.1 Introduction

This chapter considers the philosophical assumptions and theoretical concepts that have impacted upon the study and the reasons for adopting a hermeneutic phenomenological approach. I explain how hermeneutic phenomenology aligns with inclusion and how semi-structured interviews are the best fit research tool for the study. Ethical considerations for the study are explained with a discussion on the implications of my positionality within the study.

3.2 Philosophical assumptions underpinning the study

The philosophical assumptions informing the study have drawn upon hermeneutic phenomenology, underpinned by an inclusive epistemology. As a derivative of the Greek word phainomenon, which means 'appearance', phenomenology had sought to identify the realities perceived by individuals (Heidegger, 1967, 1998). According to Detmer (2013) phenomenology involved the study of human experience and sought to explore acts of consciousness such as thinking, perceiving, imagining, doubting, questioning, loving and hating. Phenomenological research found its origin in the works of Edmund Husserl (1913). Husserl developed the concept of phenomenology as a descriptive psychology, expanding this approach to include a transcendental science of consciousness (Giorgi, 1997) or intentionality (McIntyre and Woodruff Smith 1989). Farrell (2012:49) informed how Husserl's phenomenology was concerned with particular forms of knowledge that offered a 'science of the deep structures of human consciousness' and the 'essence of things in pure perception'.

As a student of Husserl, Heidegger, expanded Husserl's concept of phenomenological inquiry suggesting that humans tended to experience their world in a variety of ways which were not as descriptive as Husserl (1913) had first suggested. Smith, Flowers and Larkin (2009) referred to Husserl's descriptive phenomenology as phenomena that tended to take a more objective view of the concepts being discovered. Moreover, they suggested such concepts were considered to be general descriptions of experience without moving to a

‘fine-grained’ view of the issues and the phenomena under investigation. According to Cassidy (2010) researchers using a more subjective hermeneutic phenomenological approach were attempting to find out how people made sense of their experiences. For example, those experiences of trying to gain support due to a disability, and what meanings they may attached to such experiences. Cassidy (2010) suggested the findings from hermeneutic phenomenological research were:

> ‘highly nuanced and offered a fine grained understanding that could be used to contextualise existing quantitative research, to inform understanding of novel or under-researched topics or, in their own right, to provoke a reappraisal of what was considered [to be] known about a specified phenomenon’. (Cassidy 2010:1)

Finlay (2011:94) claimed Husserl’s objective phenomenological approach sought to ‘describe and clarify the nature of a phenomenon as studied in a traditional normative and scientific sense’. Heidegger’s (1967, 1998) hermeneutical approach to phenomenology rejected the ‘idea of suspending personal opinion’ and desired to ‘get beneath the subjective experience and find the genuine objective nature of the things as realised by an individual’ (Kafle 2011:186).

According to Cassidy (2010:6) hermeneutics were built upon the theories of Schleiermacher whose theories of interpretation were defined as a theory and practice for interpreting the meaning of biblical texts. His theories were used by Heidegger to ‘fuse his understanding of phenomenology with the theories of hermeneutics’. Contemporary hermeneutics relate to the interpretation of ‘vehicles of meaning’ not just in a written format but to ‘human actions and aspects of society and culture’ (Farrell 2012:59) Cassidy (2010) suggested phenomenology drew upon the hermeneutic paradigm in order to produce more detail and interpretation and reveal more of the ‘original meaning of the text’. According to Finlay (2011:109) hermeneutic phenomenology was considered to be a ‘shift in commitment from descriptive to [the] interpretive where a greater attention was paid to contextual meanings’. This was where, according to Finlay (2011:109) the researcher’s interpretations were ‘understood to be inextricably entwined with the research findings and context’ and ‘where the researcher-participant (inter) subjectivity [was] embraced’.

According to Lopez and Willis (2004) each phenomenological approach provided results that considered lived experiences, however, their aims were different. Both approaches enabled a researcher to listen to the descriptions of lived experiences. However, in Heidegger's (1967, 1998) hermeneutic or interpretive method, the researcher used their own prior knowledge and insight to interpret data, seeking an understanding of people's conscious realities and experiences (Kafle 2011). Such interpretation often involved drawing upon participants' contexts and trying to understand their worlds by conceptualising them within a theoretical framework (Larkin, Watts and Clifton 2006; Smith 2004; Smith and Osborn 2003). This meant researchers needed to interpret participants' descriptions, and think about how such descriptions were experienced by the individual (Larkin *et al.* 2006). Smith (2011:9) described this process as, 'engaging in a double hermeneutic, whereby the researcher was trying to make sense of the participant [who was] trying to make sense of what was happening to [themselves]'. This involved the researcher in thinking around and understanding the consciousness of both the researcher and the participants.

Husserl (1913/1982) suggested the fundamental property of consciousness or intentionality was a principle theme of phenomenology. He suggested intentionality was a characteristic feature of our mental state and experience in terms of what was called consciousness or awareness. Consciousness might also be classed as the varying states of mind during an interview of what was being said, or not being said on the part of both the participant and the interviewer. Such conscious awareness would be needed by the interviewer/researcher during the interpretation of data in terms of the awareness of context and the understanding that there were likely to be complex situations being discussed. Although my main focus of interest was the lived experiences of disabled students, the thinking of both interviewer and the interviewee permeated this study (Smith, Flowers and Larkin 2009). This study was interested in interpreting the meanings behind the students' lived experiences of support, and exploring whether inclusive practice was meeting the students' learning needs. It is for this reason the recognition of hermeneutics was important to this study.

A hermeneutic paradigm required the employment of a qualitative approach that considered individual experience and sought to explore and understand the

meanings and implications of such experiences. Rather than 'searching for one objective reality', the study was 'concerned with revealing multiple realities' (Guest, Namey and Mitchell 2013:6). This was due to the nature of a complex range of opinions and learning experiences found when studying diversity in the classroom (Ahmed and Swain 2006). Conversely, a scientific or positivist paradigm considered objective accounts of experience that sought to identify and measure variables through quantitative data collection. Phenomenology and inclusion both seek to understand and explore multiple truths, perspectives and the complexities of society. Lester (1999:1) suggested by adding an interpretive hermeneutic paradigm to phenomenological research that the findings could be used as a 'basis for practical theory' allowing the research to 'inform, support or challenge policy and action'.

3.3 The conceptual and methodological framing for the study

The study applied a phenomenological methodology in order to uncover rich accounts of the lived experiences of inclusion and exclusion and to expose the complexities and problematics of realising inclusion under the hegemonic control of neo-liberalism in HE. Inclusion was conceptualised epistemologically as being concerned with equality and human rights and the complexities found within inclusive theory. Nind *et al.* (2014) claimed the concept of inclusive education was troubled due to debates surrounding the ideology and evidence of inclusion and its place in society. Slee (2009:99) agreed suggesting the field of inclusion was seen as troublesome and Allan (2010a:604) viewing the field as troubled and contested as it battled over identity and presence'. Epistemologically, the term inclusion had tended to reject a singular pathological view of a disabled individual and rather considered the sociocultural explanation around understanding and managing a disability. As noted in section 2.6, the study acknowledged the medical and social models of disability. The social model in particular being an essential component to ensure equal access to the course and assessment was made through a process of reasonable adjustment (Westwood 2013). Such theory, although debated, was necessary to present the views and lived experiences of disabled students and demonstrate the complexity in understanding why a range of hidden disabilities in society had so often in the past been considered to be the 'fault' of the disabled person (Gibson

and Blandford 2005; Gibson 2012; Seale 2010). Inclusion sits well within the philosophical underpinning of hermeneutic phenomenology because inclusion has sought to ensure individual needs and lived experiences are explored. The links between inclusion and phenomenological research echo the need to understand 'conscious experience' which was taken from 'individuals' perceptions, feelings, and lived experiences' (Guest, Namey and Mitchell 2013:10).

It was also recognised that my understanding of the reality of what many disabled students' experienced (in respect of support) in my practice and my home (see sections 1.3 and 1.4) would need defending against the 'differing assumptions' found in different cultural and 'diverging views of the world' (Grix 2004:177). My attitudes towards inclusion and the need to see more inclusive practice playing out within my professional practice played a large part in shaping this study. Lessons learnt from the study enriched my practice and provided me with fresh ideas on how I could be more inclusive and support my colleagues. Barrington (2004) suggested some lecturers thought that if students had 'made it' to university, they should not need to, or be entitled to additional support. This suggested not all lecturers agreed that additional support should be provided for disabled students. Such an attitude may also have been connected to the audit culture placing additional performance duties on lecturers (see section 2.4) (Cruickshank 2016; Allan 2010b). It might also explain why some students were not approaching their lecturers for help. Grix (2002) informed that the world around us did not necessarily contain the absolute truth, and so it was important to recognise the differing views amongst students (and lecturers) and their different lived experiences which a hermeneutic phenomenological view was able to offer.

The use of hermeneutic phenomenology to understand the lived experiences of disabled students and the debates surrounding the concepts of inclusive practice will create implications when considering a design for the study.

3.4 Research method and rationale for the use of phenomenological semi-structured interviews

In order to explore the lived experiences of disabled students in HE and to gain

an understanding of their perceptions of support, the research tool considered to be most suitable for the study was the semi-structured interview. According to Phenomenology Online (2017) the phenomenological interview could serve a specific purpose in that it enabled an exploration and gathering of 'experiential narrative material, stories or anecdotes that could serve as a resource towards developing 'a richer and deeper understanding of a human phenomenon'. Semi-structured interviews appeared the best fit for the study as they provided a means to explore the lived experiences of disabled students and could connect the paradigms of phenomenology, hermeneutics and inclusion to the students' experiences of support.

Gibson (2012) argued interviews may not necessarily provide the ideal space for all disabled students. This was because students may have felt exposed and concerned about how much information they might divulge. On the other hand, Sandelowski (2002) claimed interviews could serve as an instrument that could include previously excluded and vulnerable groups such as disabled students. A further motivation for using semi-structured interviews was to provide a 'voice to the voiceless' (Atkinson and Silverman 1997:311). Although not ideal for all disabled students, it was noted the voices of disabled students were often not heard (Seale, 2010) or alienated by a failure to reflect their own perspectives (Goode 2007). In this study, disabled students were asked to give their own perspectives and share their experiences of learning. In so doing, the misrepresentation, alienation and under-representation of students with disabilities could be counteracted (Affleck, Glass and MacDonald (2013). Sandelowski (2002:105) suggested the 'interview had become the politically correct method to redress the wrongs of both positivism (which ostensibly provided no voice and no entrée to the private or authentic) and prejudice (which it does not care to give)'. The process of interviewing students included asking them to relate their lived experiences around the disclosure of disability, the experience of attending an SNA and experiences in the classroom. Following the true line of the phenomenological interview process, the interviews were conducted without directing or suggesting what students should say in order to allow the students to speak freely about their lived experiences (Phenomenology Online 2017).

3.5 The challenges of using phenomenological interviews as a research tool

Myers and Newman (2007) informed the general use of interviews within research could often be taken for granted and suggested interviews may be seen as a simple and straightforward means of gathering data. According to Guest, Namey and Mitchell (2013), when a phenomenological approach was applied in order to research lived experiences and inclusion, the questions being posed were believed to provide much richer data in terms of thoughts, feelings and multiple opinions. Denscombe (2010:171) suggested interviews could be useful for collecting in-depth data which could provide 'insights' into a range of experiences. In addition to this, he suggested interviews could provide flexibility in the way the questioning was used. This meant if necessary, the interviewer could adjust the line of enquiry to either probe further or follow up another line of enquiry that came to light. Such flexibility could prove useful in 'expos[ing] issues' and 'create an understanding of processes, events and emotions' (Newby 2010:338).

Interviewing had also been viewed as a useful means of gathering data, provided that ethical guidelines had been followed and the interview timing, schedule and environment were as inclusive as possible. Denscombe (2010) suggested interviews provided an opportunity to check the credibility of what was being shared by the participant in real time. It was also possible to check for accuracy and relevance across the range of lived experiences of inclusion being played out by other participants in the study. Merriam (1998) referred to this in terms of credibility within the research and the importance of gauging how congruent the findings were in terms of reality. Although the sample in this study included fourteen disabled students, the experiences were likely to be complex and carry a wide range of perceptions on support, expectations, multiple truths and realities (Guest *et al.,* 2013). Some of the challenges of using phenomenological interviews were suggested by Myers and Newman (2007:2) who claimed interviews could be 'fraught with difficulties' and would not be 'as straightforward as they appeared at first sight'. Myers and Newman (2007:3) added that interviews had a tendency to be seen as an 'artificial situation', which often 'involved the researcher in talking to someone who was a complete stranger' and expecting them to produce answers to their questions under pressure.

Fortunately, in this study I was familiar with the students having taught or tutored them during their course.

Myers and Newman (2007) informed of potential issues of trust and confidentiality for the participants who may not have been familiar with their interviewer and may, as suggested by Myers and Newman (2007) held back on information if they felt pressured. I was aware I would be interviewing disabled students who may have felt vulnerable talking to a lecturer. Indeed the students may have assumed I held some 'power' to affect their learning experiences in the future. To ensure the interview environment was as relaxed as possible, drinks and biscuits were provided. This was done in order to deformalise the interview to some extent. Interestingly, I found I had to keep a close eye on the time because most students had a story to tell and were eager to share the details of their support with me.

Another challenge with phenomenological interviews according to Clough and Nutbrown (2012) was that although there was an opportunity to collect a large amount of rich data, the transcribing and analysis could be time consuming. The time involved transcribing interviews, was, however, something I recognised as valuable in terms of hearing the students' voices (Seale 2010) and developing the skills of thinking and reflecting carefully on each student's lived experience. According to Newby (2010) another challenge found with phenomenological interviewing was that interview data may become too subjective and thus become open to bias particularly on the part of the interviewer which Denscombe (2010:171) referred to as the 'interviewer effect'. Gray (2009) suggested it was important for the interviewer to maintain a similar tone of voice for each interview. This was a real challenge for me as I was usually meeting students straight after a teaching session, or trying to fit in an interview between meetings which meant there was usually limited time to think about what tone of voice I was going to use during the interview. I did try to follow the same format when asking questions in order to ensure I provided the same opportunity to each student. The interviews did sometimes become more conversational and at times increased in 'levels of flexibility' (Edwards and Holland 2013:3). This did mean that students were relaxed and eager to tell their stories which became less descriptive and more interesting in content. Listening to my interviewing

technique during transcription enabled me to ensure I was keeping the interview as inclusive as possible and also supported my developing skills in interviewing. Edwards and Holland (2013) claimed the interviewer and the interviewees were likely to learn much about themselves during the process of an interview.

As I transcribed the interviews I learnt I had a tendency to over talk the students at times. I quickly learned to listen more carefully and allow the students to share more of their lived experiences. I also learned to probe a little deeper, which Kafle (2011) suggested was what phenomenological research was really all about. A gentle probe enabled the students to think a little deeper and share more of their 'lived experience'. Depending upon the nature of the discussion, this meant the questions did vary a little, however, this slight deviation usually meant individual experiences were being recognised which created much richer data.

An interesting concern from Denscombe (2010:171) that needed to be considered was whether the participants were actually telling the truth. He was concerned that data collected during a phenomenological interview was usually 'based on what people said rather than what they did'. Moreover, he suggested that what the participant said they did or what they may think they did, may not necessarily match with the 'truth' of what they actually did experience or think they experienced. This is why it was important to remember that phenomenological research dealt with multiple truths and connected into different areas of the participants' consciousness. Heidegger (1967, 1998; Kafle 2011) reminded that the consciousness contained a range of conscious realities and experiences. Some realities of which may have been true, however, on the other hand, some information may have been misinterpreted by students, but to them was a truth. This possibility was recognised and I tried to keep this in mind as I transcribed and analysed the data.

Another area that may have affected the credibility or trustworthiness in the study involved the potential use of leading questions. Such questions may have caused the participant to answer in the way the interviewer was expecting rather than allowing participants to share their own truths. Edwards and Holland (2013:79) suggested the power base originally assumed to be with the

interviewer could if not handled carefully, move to the interviewee ‘as a result of the positioning of both interviewer and interviewee within the interview situation itself’. This related to the discussion from Barnes (1998) earlier in the study (see section 2.12) where there were possibilities for power relationships to develop if either the researcher or the participant allowed such relationships to take place. Clarke (2006:21) suggested the essentiality of developing a non-hierarchical relationship between researcher and participant. She warned the participants ‘might be drawn to say things they [may] regret afterwards, even if this was not apparent at the time’. I found as I had already developed a rapport with the students and positioned myself as someone wishing to support student voice and inclusive practice. I wanted to ensure I had included student views that were ‘central to the study’ (Liasidou 2014:128) and ensure the students could participate ‘actively and contribute to transformative change’. I was what Edwards and Holland (2013:79) referred to as an ‘insider researcher’. As I listened to the students and allowed for silences, rather than jumping in to provide answers, I allowed the students space to think through their answers without pressure and to portray what they believed was the ‘truth’.

3.6 Credibility and trustworthiness

In qualitative research there are different ways of explaining the quality and rigour expected. Shenton (2004) suggested that rather than using terminology such as reliability and validity, the concepts of dependability, creditability and trustworthiness were more appropriate to use in a phenomenological research. Denscombe (2010:132) informed the phenomenological interview was likely to include ‘emotions, feelings and experiences’ where the uses of credibility and trustworthiness were more fitting to such subjective research. Merriam (1998) claimed a key part of credibility and trustworthiness in research was in choosing the best fit research tool and developing an early familiarity with the potential sample. Similarly Shenton (2004) suggested a useful aspect of credibility was to gain trust through developing relationships with the potential participants.

According to Lincoln and Guba (1985) another way of ensuring credibility and trustworthiness was through the triangulation of data collection which involved a multiple use of methods to develop a comprehensive understanding of the

phenomena taking place. Such practice was useful in this phenomenological study as it provided comparable data from students studying different subjects and from across all three stages of the degree. This enabled the study to form a cross sectional view of student experience and perception of support and provided opportunities to check the credibility of the research. Burgess, Sieminski and Arthur (2006) suggested triangulation was necessary to ensure the results being collected could be checked across different samples. It also meant 'view points and experiences could be verified against another' (Lincoln and Guba 1985:65).

3.7 The pilot of the phenomenological interview questions

Costley and Gibbs (2006) advised interview questions should be created initially around what the researcher wanted to know with reference to what was found in the literature and by looking for gaps in knowledge. This advice was followed carefully by reading the literature underpinning the study. There were already some questions in mind from working within my own practice with disabled students and with the view the study would be phenomenological in nature. Clough and Nutbrown (2012:52) suggested questions for research could be developed from using different situations in practice and then trying to 'think beyond the familiar and personally known to the roots of a situation'. I tried to adopt this stance in writing my own research questions in order to be more original in my collection of data. This involved thinking about the students and their lived experiences of support and where such needs may not have been met. I was interested in the process of how students gained support through the SNA (obtained through the Student Wellbeing Service) and how this related to the practice of the lecturer in the classroom.

As the initial interview questions were considered, I realised the questions were largely focused on gathering general information about student experience. The questions did not delve or probe into the 'root of the situation' or the communication and relationship dilemmas suited to a phenomenological research. Nor did the questions seek an understanding of inclusion, rights, policies, quality or standards. I wanted to know what the students saw as their rights in education and whether their expectations were being met in terms of

resources. I also wanted to know if lecturers recognised their responsibilities and undertook training and support to meet student needs. I was interested in the quality of learning taking place with a view to understanding how learners' differences were valued (Ofsted 2013). I also wanted to learn what reasonable adjustments might be needed and how this was undertaken to ensure an equality of opportunity for all students. I was also aware of the need to ensure I used clear language in the questions and to avoid involving my own thoughts and personal remarks which might influence or bias the responses I received.

Newby (2010) informed that creating a pilot phenomenological interview ensured potential problems with clarity and understanding could be found early and modified accordingly. In qualitative research it was essential to ensure credibility and trustworthiness was maintained (Shenton 2004). According to White (2003:66) researchers may 'unwittingly make questions too narrow' or may not have provided the participants with enough opportunity to 'express themselves fully'. This could have had a far reaching effect on the interpretations being made within the study in terms of missing important information.

A list of twenty five questions was created which needed to be pruned into a practical list to match the research aims and recognise the phenomenological stance of the study. The questions needed to be evidenced within the literature on themes surrounding the disclosure of disability, diagnosis and references to inclusive practice within the classroom (Madriaga *et al.* 2011, Seale 2010 and Fuller *et al,* 2004 a and b). The questions were piloted with a small group of post graduate and undergraduate students known to the researcher who also had disabilities. Some of group included three of my children who had attended university in the past. Academic peers and colleagues in the Student Wellbeing Service were also included in order to confirm terminology and to ensure the study was as inclusive and ethical as possible (Clarke 2006). The pilot study involved the group answering the interview questions in the form of a questionnaire where they could write down answers to the questions, and also correct or change the questions if they appeared unclear (see Appendix two).

Some interview questions were found to be repetitive and pruning and reorganisation was needed (Newby 2010). The post graduate student

recommended the addition of themes to enable some fluency in the interview process and to enable the analysis and hermeneutic interpretation process. Piloting the interview questions also helped in the planning of time scales. This meant I was able to gauge the interview would last approximately 30 minutes. The piloting of interview questions with disabled students related to the importance of credibility and trustworthiness in research. Shenton (2004:69) suggested the research being undertaken should encourage participants to be frank and to be able talk 'without fear of losing their own credibility'. This was particularly important in a phenomenological study seeking the lived experiences of disabled students and their perceptions of inclusive practice. By piloting the interview questions with likeminded participants and using the same principles of credibility and trustworthiness in the pilot, there was good chance creditability and trustworthiness could be achieved with the actual research participants.

The interview questions were standardised in order to ensure they were asked in the same order and could be covered in approximately thirty minutes. Open questions were included in order to provide students with an opportunity to discuss their lived experiences. This was done with limited restraint on the way the students answered or wanted to express themselves (Newby 2010). It was important to ensure the students could talk about their 'lived experiences' (Gibson 2012). I wanted the students to be able to discuss the support they were receiving and the support they felt should or could be put into place to support them further in their studies. The standardisation of the questions was adopted in order to maintain some control and to ensure rich data was collected. The standardisation was also planned so that the phenomenological hermeneutic approach could be applied during the transcription and analysis stages and could be processed as efficiently as possible using narrative statements and thematic analysis (Gillham 2005). (The schedule of interview questions used in the study can be found in Appendix two).

3.8 The research process and time scale for student interviews

The research took the form of phenomenological interviews to a selection of fourteen students from stages one, two and three. Each student was enrolled either as a single honours or a joint honours student. Joint honours students are

students who are studying two subjects on a 50-50 basis or they may have chosen to major in one subject and minor in the other. Each student was registered as having a LSP for a hidden disability in the focus university and had given their consent for a phenomenological interview to take place. Consent to interview students with hidden disabilities was also sought from the Student Wellbeing Service before commencement of the interviews. This was to ensure the Student Wellbeing Service was aware disabled students were being interviewed and any ethical implications around the interview questions and their content had been discussed and were managed (see Appendix one).

3.9 Sampling strategy

The sample of fourteen students was drawn from participants who gave informed voluntary consent to participate in the study. The email included a background to the study inviting participation from all students studying in my practice who were in possession of a LSP. According to Blaxter, Hughes and Tight (2010) the sample would be referred to as a non-random (non-probability) voluntary sample. This is because only a section of the population within the focus university had been approached for the study. As I was seeking students for the study with a disability, White (2000:62) informed that research with a qualitative and subjective approach may be required to seek a sample for a particular 'purpose'. This is where the sample could also be considered to be 'purposive' as all the students who were contacted were all registered with a disability. This also meant each participant had the characteristics which met the criteria for the study.

The sample was as follows:

- 12 females and 2 males. 13 White British and 1 Jamaican female. All students were full time, home undergraduate students studying in Education Studies or were part of the Joint honours scheme that included Education Studies as part of their degree.
- 9 of the students were enrolled as single honours students studying Education studies and 5 students were enrolled as joint honours students studying Education Studies alongside a range of subjects such as English/Theatre Studies, Sociology, Creative Writing and Business Studies.

- the participants were interviewed from all 3 stages in their degree. 1 student was a January starter and taking modules in stages 2 and 3 (level 5 and 6).
- the ages of students ranged from age 19 - 56.

Sending out a background of the study (see Appendix one) attracted a range of participants; however, the sample of fourteen was smaller than expected. This may have been due to disabled students not wishing to discuss or reveal any further information about themselves (Barer 2007). Another reason for a smaller sample may have been because the person undertaking the study was a lecturer rather than one of their peers. I recognised that using phenomenological interviews could be problematic in terms of the participants not wanting to share their true feelings about their learning (Myers and Newman 2007). I was aware most students found me approachable and some had suggested they would be interested in sharing their lived experiences with me. With this in mind, I decided to take the risk and seek out as much meaningful information as possible in order to support my own practice and support the growing community of disabled students on our course.

It should be recognised that a small sample such as this would mean there were limitations as to whether this sample of students would represent the whole population of disabled students in my practice (Newby 2010). After emailing students twice over a period of four weeks, with limited response, I decided to analyse the 14 interviews that had taken place. Although the sample did not represent the whole population of disabled students, the sample were an adequate cross section because they were likely to have provided multiple opinions around the support received by the majority of disabled students in my practice.

3.10 Ethical considerations

Clark (2006) claimed that research also involved dimensions of ethics, especially with phenomenological interviews because they included an interaction with a sample which produced information about personal experiences. Newby (2010:342) explained how during a phenomenological interview, ‘a high level of empathy was required’ in order to ensure the interviewer was aware of the

student's vulnerability during the interview. As this study was phenomenological and inclusive in nature there was a need to phrase questions with due care. Newby (2010:342) suggested the researcher needed to use the process of 'imagining' how the student would feel whilst being interviewed. A consideration of the language used was also important to ensure the interviewee did not have difficulty in understanding what the interviewer was asking. This was one of the purposes of the pilot, however, there may have still been difficulties present. Costley and Gibbs (2006) informed that careful consideration should be given to the ethics surrounding the questioning of people particularly around sensitive issues. This was particularly important in terms of disabled students who may have been more vulnerable towards issues of distress, discomfort or embarrassment. An example of this may have been around asking students with dyslexia about their feelings of failure to match up to the literary standards expected in HE (Collinson and Penketh 2010). Another example might be an attempt to reason with a student as to why disclosure had been such an issue to them (Matthews 2007).

During the interview process the emotional states of some students were evident as students discussed their disability and the highs and lows of studying in HE. This insight into the students' emotions was noticed during interview and also in early transcription of some of the interviews as mentioned earlier in this section. There were occasions when I needed to remind myself that I was a practitioner researcher (Drake and Heath 2011), and try not to show too much subjectivity in terms of surprise or dismay as the students shared their experiences. It was very difficult to remain objective as I felt as though I could have sat and cried with some of the students. I was impressed how the students shared some of their inner most feelings and anxieties with me. I realised I was sitting in a very privileged position and reminded the students as necessary, of the confidential nature of our discussion. I also recognised the ethics behind the use of empathy as suggested by Costley and Gibbs (2006) and tried to connect with the lived experiences being explained by the students.

The main guidelines used for educational ethical practice had been taken from the British Educational Research Association (BERA, 2011:3) who 'represented the tenets of best ethical practice'. The aims of such guidelines being to:

> Enable educational researchers to weigh up all aspects of the process of conducting educational research within any given context… and to reach an ethically acceptable position in which their actions are considered justifiable and sound. (BERA 2011:4)

This phenomenological study aimed to support and enhance the current systems of support in place within the focus university and to ensure ethical considerations were applied. Newby (2010) suggested there were three areas of ethics that needed taking into consideration when embarking upon research and the following were closely adhered to in this study. These involved:

- informed consent
- confidentiality
- consequences of the interviews, and what happens with the information that had been collected.

This study ensured informed consent was received from a gatekeeper within the Student Wellbeing Service before any disabled students were contacted to ensure the research questions were ethical and in line with university policy and practice. Each area of the study was checked to ensure ethical considerations had taken place (Newby 2010; Oliver 2010). The study had also undergone scrutiny through the focus university's ethics committee where the proposal of research method was approved (see Appendix one). The study also related to the BERA (2011) ethical guidelines and the focus universities ethical guidelines (UoD 2012) to ensure all guidelines were followed as requested.

In addition to approval from an ethics committee in the focus university, it was also important to ensure the research design was followed through as approved and each participant was provided with an outline of the research and offered an opportunity to give consent before the start of the interview. Each participant was informed of what would happen to the data collected and how the data would be used. Each participant was also informed on how to withdraw information by a certain date (Charlesworth 2015) (see Appendix one). According to Shenton (2004:67) the opportunity given for the participant to withdraw from the study if they wished to, was key to the credibility, trustworthiness and authenticity of the study. This allowed the participant to withdraw 'without losing their own credibility'.

In the early stages of recruiting students to attend the phenomenological interview I was aware that some of the students may not have initially wanted to be involved in the study because of any potential power or authority difficulties in being interviewed by a lecturer. Some students may have had concerns that the information they gave might backfire on them (Gosling 2007). I was aware I needed to manage any emotions with sensitivity and recognise how some students may have viewed the study as an opportunity to make trouble for certain lecturers. Allmark, Boote, Chambers, Clarke, McDonnell, Thompson and Todd (2009:14) informed there was limited information as to how researchers could address such concerns. I recognised the need to reflect upon ethical awareness at each stage of the study through reflexive practice (Drake and Heath 2011). Reflexivity was seen as a process of self-awareness for the researcher during the research process which meant the researcher ensured the information collected was authentic and transparent and therefore allowed for a more accurate analysis and interpretation.

According to Drake and Heath (2011) there were likely to be a range of controversial or sensitive issues uncovered which could relate to student or lecturer conduct. I recognised it was possible that students might share sensitive information about themselves as well as sensitive information about members of staff within my practice. The confidentiality clause around information collected as well as anonymising student identity was put into place to ensure any information shared was protected. According to BERA (2011) ethical considerations were put in place to ensure no harm came to the participants during the collecting or analysis of the study. This ensured both legal and moral considerations were taken into account and advice sought before sensitive information was shared in the discussion of the study.

Lang (2007) informed on the importance of sensitivity whilst interviewing students about their lived experiences and the importance of recognising a potential emotional impact upon an individual. This was particularly important if the conversation was discussing a student's feelings around their disability and inclusive practice. With this in mind it was useful to refer to Costley and Gibbs (2006:244) who suggested a 'three phased social process of care'. This involved

the interviewer in demonstrating characteristics such as ‘engrossment, empathy and disposition’. This meant the interviewer needed to focus their thinking on the participant’s needs, rather than their own gain of information during the interview. It also meant providing a trusting, comfortable environment, free of restriction and authority. Gibbs and Costley (2006:26) suggested an informal persona should be created by the interviewer that supported the participant both during and after the interview.

Oliver (2010:56) suggested that by being sensitive to the needs of the participant, the interviewer could pick up quickly on any ’issues arising which might be disconcerting for the interviewee’. The interviewer could then provide ‘an opportunity for the interviewee to be released from the interview’ if necessary. It was also useful to bear in mind how the BERA guidelines (2011:16-17) informed researchers to be aware of and comply with Articles 3 and 12 of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (1990). These regulations also referred to young people and vulnerable adults and sought to ensure participants in research were allowed to ‘form their own views’ and ‘express their views freely’ both during the interview and as necessary after the interview if the withdrawal of information was necessary.

Originally the study had proposed to include interviews to lecturers in order to enable an academic voice to respond to the students’ lived experiences when seeking support for their disabilities in the classroom. As the student interviews progressed I was given opportunities to disseminate some of the findings where I found some interesting ethical dilemmas arising with lecturers in the audience. On several occasions as I was presenting some of the initial findings in team meetings and conferences, it appeared lecturers were demonstrating some levels of awkwardness and insecurity towards the data. My presentation involved the use of posters that showed anecdotes from disabled students who were experiencing difficulties in the classroom. The anecdotes expressed a range of positive and negative experiences in HE classrooms. Although the majority of lecturers were nodding their heads in agreement to many of the difficulties the disabled students were experiencing. Some lecturers commented on their concern that some of the anecdotes may be referring to their teaching. Lecturers were also trying to guess which student on the course had said what. I

found the study was starting to cause a stir amongst colleagues in terms of their teaching standards which was threatening the ethics of potentially interviewing colleagues. This situation is discussed further in section 3.13.3 in terms of the reflexivity used.

Linked to this was another example where during a presentation to a group of colleagues from a neighbouring college, a colleague thought he recognised his wife's lived experience as a student with dyslexia at the focus university. Clarke (2006:23) alluded to a similar experience where she claimed colleagues thought they 'recognised participants' in her study. I handled the situation in a similar manner to Clarke (2006) by reminding colleagues of the strict confidentiality of the research and avoided further discussion about who the participants may have been. I felt concerned I may 'become implicated with ethical issues', (Costly and Gibbs 2006) and cause some issues for myself and my colleagues. Drake and Heath (2011) lamented on the difficulties of doing research within one's own practice and the potential impact upon 'personal and professional relationships with colleagues' (Drake and Heath 2011:47). The study was not proposing to cause colleagues any concerns or distress around the way they taught (Drake and Heath 2011). The study was rather exploring what could be learned from disabled students to enhance practice and support the improvement of HE teaching.

My intentions were to keep to a strict ethical code and avoid difficult or uncomfortable situations for both the students and staff. As my initial findings for the study had received an interesting albeit rather awkward response from colleagues, I decided to focus wholly on the students' experiences while studying in HE.

3.11 Recording and storage of data collected

The phenomenological interviews were recorded using an I-Pad device which involved the recorded information being emailed through to a computer and transcribed. Charlesworth (2015) suggested research data could be collected in a variety of ways. For example questionnaires, or recorded interviews, focus groups or online surveys. Each could be stored either as handwritten notes, or

recorded electronically. Charlesworth (2015) suggested each tool for collecting and storing data posed different issues in terms of ensuring confidentiality, and that care should be taken to prevent unauthorised access and prevention of accidental loss or damage. For the purpose of this study, all data was kept secure through password protected electronic devices such as a laptop and a data stick to protect against electronic device failure. The data was then anonymised during analysis to ensure participants could not be identified.

3.12 Analysis of data

According to Smith, Karman and Osborne (1999) phenomenological analysis involved the close reading of transcripts and the making of notes around any reflexive moments from interviews. In addition to this, Sloane and Bowe (2014:3) suggested phenomenological analysis and interpretation involved the application of the 'skill of reading texts… spoken accounts of personal experience… and isolating themes' whereby the themes could be written as lived experiences. The notes made during this process were likely to include recurring phrases, questions from the researcher, recognition of own emotions and comments on the student's lived experiences and responses. There were two choices on how to analyse the interview data, namely narrative analysis and thematic analysis.

According to Newby (2010:500) narrative analysis 'looks at statements produced by individuals' with the thinking that this type of analysis could probe deep into the 'concerns, values and attitudes of the narrator' and help the research to get 'closer… to an individual's personal experience…'. Schutt (2011) suggested narrative analysis could focus the research onto the flow of the person's experience and seek to make sense of what they had experienced. He suggested each person would have their own story to tell which would need to be interpreted through analysis. To analyse an interview transcript using a phenomenological narrative analysis, Gillham (2005) suggested the transcript could be edited by picking out only the statements that answered the research questions. This was likely to involve a close analysis of each transcript and would take some considerable time in transcription. This type of analysis was of a more descriptive nature and related to the descriptive phenomenological interpretation outlined by Husserl (1913/2008). For the purpose of this study, the

transcripts were initially read through and highlighted in what appeared to be the most meaningful areas of discussion. There were areas where the students had wandered into other conversations of irrelevance and so the irrelevant sections were edited out. Gillham (2005:128) suggested 'the art lies in selecting direct quotations that… reflect the actual interview' where careful judgement was used to ensure a balanced end result. Using an initial narrative analysis also provided an option for thematic analysis to be used.

Following a similar analysis to narrative analysis, thematic analysis, according to Newby (2010) involved breaking up the interview transcript into particular themes or categories in order to expose more meaning behind the student's lived experiences. Themes such as 'diagnosis'; 'disclosure'; 'study needs assessment'; 'study equipment'; and 'difficulties experiences in the classroom' were used which had already been drafted into the interview questions to support the analysis of data. As each theme was considered, key words were established to ascertain the repetition and similarity between the different students' responses and to help support a meaningful interpretation of the data. Although using themes and keywords were helpful in the initial writing up of the discussion, I often felt the need to return to the full transcripts in order to ensure the true context of the 'lived experiences' were being reported. (Gibson 2012).

The focus here was to use hermeneutic analysis which provided a deeper understanding of the multiple truths that were emerging in the data. Hermeneutic analysis also helped to keep the analysis in context. I wanted to ensure the data being used was as authentic as possible (Henry *et al.* (2008). According to Milne (2005:2) 'qualitative researchers want their research context to be authentic' and this was because the reasoning behind most qualitative research was:

> To observe and participate in authentic experiences that [could] be described and explained with the purpose of achieving a deeper understanding of a particular phenomenon. (Milne 2005:2)

Milne (2005) continued that researchers wanted to 'describe, understand and explain other's lived experiences' which could in time become their 'lived experience'. Ensuring the authenticity of the study was an essential component, I wanted the students to know their voice was being heard and would contribute

to changes being made to the improvement of teaching and course design in the future (Morgan and Houghton 2011). During the transcribing of the interviews some of the ‘umms’ and ‘ers’ were removed in order to support an ease of reading, however, where these provided an emphasis of student experience, they were left in.

In order to ensure the analysis was well organised and clear, a spread sheet using Microsoft Excel was utilised in order to ensure the careful recording of statements and experiences. This was used as an alternative to a computer assisted analysis systems such as ‘Computer Assisted Qualitative Data Analysis Software (CAQDAS) and NVivo, which could be useful if large amounts of data were being analysed. I decided to focus closely on the data and note down my thoughts and queries through the use of the Microsoft Excel spreadsheet. This enabled me to consider multiple truths and meaning first hand and look for further patterns and themes.

Themes were first listed on the table used with coding and sub coding where appropriate. The following table provides an overview of the layout used in the thematic analysis.

<u>An overview of the layout for thematic analysis</u>

Theme	Code	Sub code	Quotation	Student ID
Diagnosis	Seeking diagnosis	-	I just knew that I wasn’t doing well, I just couldn’t work it out	Linda stage 2 JHS Dyslexia

Table three - Sample of the analysis layout used.

3.13 Managing positionality within the study

3.13.1 Managing my role as a practitioner researcher using a phenomenological approach.

My role as a researcher was referred to by Drake and Heath (2011:29) as a 'practitioner researcher'. Lee (2009:6) informed practitioner researchers were professionals who associated themselves with problematic situations within their own practice. Drake and Heath (2011) suggested one of the main tenets of practitioner research was how it related to the ways practitioner researchers could create a critical position for themselves within their practice. This meant the practitioner researcher was likely to be critically thinking through, evaluating and questioning a combination of understandings within their practice (Wisdom 2014). For this study, researching within the paradigm of phenomenology and inclusion and attempting to explore the lived experiences of disabled students, I found there was much thinking and reflecting to be undertaken. This was due to the complexity of inclusive practice and the diversity linked to students' lived experiences (Ahmed and Swain 2006); and the varying levels of support the students might be receiving. There were also likely to be a host of multiple opinions around the idea of inclusion, rights, disclosure and feelings of disadvantage. The critical thinking mentioned above also included the exploration of the practitioner researcher's own position in the setting as well as their understanding of what worked well or not so well in practice (Lee 2009). This again related to my practice and how well (or not) inclusive strategies were working for disabled students. Such thinking and evaluation also included the consideration of the practitioner researcher's own personal and professional perceptions on the realities of everyday practice. These included concerns that students did not appear to be getting the support they needed from their lecturers or from the Student Wellbeing Service. This was done so that my perceptions could be placed alongside those of the students and the deliberations of my colleagues as necessary. Such thinking provided the opportunity to explore potential opportunities for the development of new knowledge (Lee 2009) and to identify problems that were of 'direct relevance to [my] own professional interests and institutional concerns' (Drake and Heath 2011:7).

According to Dadds (2004:2), researching within practice could provide an opportunity to identify improvement within the real life area of practice. There may also have been opportunities to implement gradual change over a period of time. Doncaster and Thorne (2000:392) suggested such research could also enable the practitioner to develop more fully as a professional within their professional practice as a 'scholarly professional'. Although useful for my practice, I thought it was more important to get involved in listening, as suggested by Jacklin and Robinson (2007) and become enlightened on the lived experiences of our students (Seale 2010). This was done in order to explore the improvements professionals may need to put into place to ensure a more inclusive learning experience for all students.

Lester (2004) informed the role of the practitioner researcher could have involved elements of objectivity initially. This was where the practitioner researcher traditionally stood back to view practice 'using concepts set and solved in context' (Lester 2004:768). In this study, this happened whilst a decision was being made on this area of research. Once the area of inclusion was decided upon, I decided to take deeper steps into the realms of subjectivity by adopting a phenomenological approach that explored the lived experiences of its participants and sought rich, meaningful data (Guest *et al.* 2013). Le Gallais (2008:146) warned that such 'rich and complex knowledge held by the researcher, although useful for the research, may also cause problems for the research in terms of ethics. It may be that the researcher became involved in some form of bias which could challenge the credibility of the research.

In terms of ensuring credibility and trustworthiness in my research, I found I was constantly moving between the positions of outsider researcher to insider researcher (Drake and Health 2011). I was observing my practice from a distance and then observing practice much closer as I worked alongside colleagues and students. This position was undertaken in order to identify in more depth what the problems were and how the students' perceptions of their lived experiences had come about. Humphrey (2007:19 in Drake and Heath 2011:26) referred to this position as the 'insider-outsider hyphen' and suggested researchers were likely to be 'sliding along or 'being shunted along' the insider-

outsider continuum and ‘suffering dissonances between self-identifications and other attributions’. This suggested the practitioner researcher needed to actively take charge of each position they found themselves in and ensure they did not ‘lose sight of’ the unique work they were undertaking (Drake and Heath 2011:27).

3.13.2 Credibility and trustworthiness in the practitioner researcher’s role and positionality in the study

Drake and Heath (2011) reminded practitioner researchers they were likely to bring their personal and professional experiences of settings into play as they observed and considered their practice setting for research. It was also important to remember that this study adopted the phenomenological and hermeneutic views of interpretation and the complexities found within inclusive theory. There were likely to be a range of multiple truths that would add to the layers of complexity and these needed reflecting upon.

As a stakeholder in education, I was positioned as a senior lecturer who had worked in HE practice for 14 years. I worked my way up from associate lecturing to permanent work by lecturing large groups of students and later taking on the duties of stage tutor, course leader and college lead over the Joint Honours students studying in Education Studies. As a mother of 7 children, mostly diagnosed with disabilities (i.e. Asperger’s Syndrome, Epilepsy, Dyslexia and severe depression), I had taken the stance of being a supporter and motivator both in my professional practice and in supporting my own children through university. My Christian values taught of love, care, honesty and service towards my fellowmen and so it had been natural for me to want to provide a caring and supportive environment for students and staff alike.

My ontological view involved defending my stance on inclusion for all within my practice amidst the ‘differing assumptions’ found in within practice and the literature which contained the ‘diverging views of the world’ (Grix (2002:177). In addition to this Christou, Valachis and Anastasiadou (2002:6) informed that the ‘ontological and epistemological approaches adopted within a study would have a direct impact on the methodological approach’. As I had been exploring the

lived experiences of disabled students, the phenomenological approach suited this well.

My personal values and morals have driven the research through my determination to be supportive of disabled students. I have observed students who appeared to struggle with classroom activities and assignments and it was only after seeking guidance from them on what would support their learning in class that they have disclosed a disability or difficulty. This enabled me to make a reasonable adjustment to support their needs in class.

3.13.3 Reflexivity and managing dilemmas in the study

The use of reflective practice and reflexivity had already been an essential component in the study (Finlay 2008). This related to the ways I needed to connect to the thoughts and feelings of students as they shared their lived experiences with me, and I found myself thinking through a range of dilemmas. For example, whilst I recognised students were going to be telling me about lecturers and other staff in HE who were inclusive (Mintz 2008). There were likely to be students who would report on difficult circumstances around lecturers and other staff who were less inclusive. I needed to think and work out how to report back on such data ethically. This was undertaken by ensuring the names of lecturers were anonymous and the situation being changed slightly so lecturers would not recognise themselves in the study (Floyd and Arthur 2012).

Hibbert, MacIntosh and Coupland (2010) informed how the terms ‘reflective’ and ‘reflexive’ were often used together in the literature, however, they suggested each term, although sounding similar played different roles in research. Malaurent and Avison (2017:920) asserted that when reflection was used in research, it was referring to the observation of practice. Reflexivity on the other hand, suggested a ‘complexification of thinking and experience, or thinking about experience’. From this it could be seen that reflexivity was involved in the process of exposing or questioning the ways that research was being undertaken and how it reflected the influence and effects of the researcher on the research at each stage. Malterud (2001:483) reminded that:

> The researcher's background and position [would] affect what they choose to investigate, the angle of investigation, the methods judged most adequate for this purpose, the findings considered most appropriate, and the framing and communication of conclusions. Malterud (2001:483)

A further example of reflexive practice was evident when a dilemma arose around the proposed interviews of both students and lecturers on their experiences of managing disability in the classroom.

The dilemma developed as I was disseminating my research findings to colleagues from the interviews undertaken with disabled students in my practice, (prior to any interviews being undertaken with lectures). I had presented a range of anecdotes from the students' data on posters and presented these for colleagues to view and discuss. I was surprised that some colleagues asked questions around the identity of the students and appeared to be relating some of anecdotes presented by the students into their own classroom settings. For some lecturers this appeared to be a game, however, the discomfort demonstrated by some colleagues was alarming to me. It was as if their practice was being exposed and they were seeking reassurance that the students were not referring to them personally. This experience caused me to consider my role as an insider researcher more seriously. I found that I was in a situation where I needed to manage the micro politics of the situation as I was starting to feel somewhat uncomfortable myself and compromised in the research. I was concerned because I did not want to cause any difficulties for myself or my colleagues during the present time or in the future.

My original aims had been to explore the perceptions of students and lecturers on support in HE classrooms. However, after thinking through and evaluating the implications and ethical dilemmas involved in interviewing lecturers, and taking into account the experiences I had had during dissemination to colleagues; the decision was made to focus wholly on the lived experiences of disabled students. Research with colleagues would be interesting but needed to be thought through and managed possibly through a positivist approach and include a wider group across the university. This would serve to avoid the personal discomfort and potential exposures experienced by myself and my colleagues and provide more

knowledge and understanding around the difficulties being experienced by lecturers in HE.

Floyd and Arthur (2012:3) provided some understanding around this dilemma suggesting insider research often related to 'deeper level ethical and moral dilemmas' that caused conflict with 'professional and researcher roles and anonymity. Attia and Edge (2017) also informed how the insider researcher role could involve deep engagement into the lived experiences of participants and could place the researcher into a 'powerful and reflexive position'. This is what I believe this dilemma had done for me. I was aware that collecting data as a new researcher could be messy (Floyd and Arthur 2012). Involving colleagues could have compromised working relationships through potential asymmetries of power adopted either by myself or a colleague. Knowledge revealed during a research interview may have exposed a colleague's weaknesses and thus impacted upon the working relationship should either the interviewer or participant be engaged in a future leadership role. Such knowledge in the context of a neo-liberal environment could have exposed a negative complicity that although pronounced confidential during the interview, may have needed to been addressed in order to avoid sabotaging future opportunities.

It was also important that my values and beliefs around care, support and trustworthiness were maintained and that my credibility remained intact. The process of thinking around such issues did affect how I decided to proceed with the study, as I wanted to avoid creating any further concerns within my colleagues. I informed my colleagues that the students were referring to lecturers outside of the area and made the decision not to interview my colleagues after all. I felt an allegiance and responsibility towards my colleagues (as well as to the study) and wanted to ensure the study did not impact negatively on their practice in terms of causing feelings of inadequacy within their job role (Costley and Gibbs 2006) or engage in the asymmetries of power discussed above. Drake and Heath (2011) suggested the insider researcher needed to be mindful of potential issues of power, conflict and tension and then, through the use of reflexivity consider how best to manage each situation as it arrived. An important point from Drake (2010) was to remember that researchers had to live with the consequences of their actions, which could impact upon their

practice and relationships with colleagues for many years as well as impacting upon the institution where they worked.

In summary, this chapter has identified the reasons that such a study should take place. The numbers of students entering HE with disabilities has risen over the last decade, and it appears likely to continue to do so. Although inclusive policy and legislation has been put into place to protect disabled students from discrimination and disadvantage, it may be difficult to ensure full implementation.

The philosophical underpinnings for the study and research design and method of interviewing have provided a basis for discussion and analysis in terms of accessibility and suitability for the study. An exploration into phenomenological interviews has taken place and the analysis and reporting of such. There is much inclusive literature in place to provide a theoretical underpinning for this study and this has been discussed in terms of the theoretical and philosophical assumptions that underpin the study. The role of the practitioner researcher has been explored alongside the potential ethical implications that may occur for the researcher as they move between the positions of the insider-outsider researcher within their professional context. This takes place alongside the reflexive decisions made as they undertake their journey throughout the research study.

The following diagram shows the outline of how the data was generated.

Outline of Data Generation			
2012 – 2014	**Pilot Data (2014)**	**Phase 1 (2014/15)**	**Phase 2 (2015-2017)**
Engaged in teaching modules on SEN and Disability Enquiring around use of support plans discussing dilemmas with colleagues and students Undertaking a literature research into students with disability in HE Exploring methodological approaches to identify ways to improve current system Putting together an ethic proposal to explore lived experiences of disabled students	Approached disabled undergraduate, post graduate and students to undertake a pilot questionnaire Meeting with the head of Student Wellbeing to gain consent to interview disabled students Meeting with the head of Student wellbeing to receive guidance for pilot interviews on the correct terminology used. Background of research sent out to all students with an LSP in my practice Undertaking of 14 interviews The start of the analysis Dissemination to colleagues in focus university	Analysis of 14 interviews and draft of finding Writing up the draft of findings and continued contribution to the literature review and methodology. Meeting with a Senior member of staff in Student Wellbeing to seek clarity on student concerns Further reading to identify changes to Disabled Students Allowance (DSA) Dissemination to colleagues in focus university Dissemination to University in South of England	Writing up the findings. Redefining the style of writing in terms of phenomenology and hermeneutics. Recognising authenticity, credibility and truthfulness within the research. Recognising the context within students opinions Dissemination to a university in East of England Participation in two research groups in focus university a) Support plan review b) Improving inclusive teaching

Table four - Overview of data generating process

The following diagram provides a visual conceptual framework for the study which highlights the issues connected to inclusive practice throughout the student's journey. This shows the process from an identification of disability to receiving support and the impact of inclusive or none inclusive practice in the classroom.

These issues are discussed in-depth in the following section.

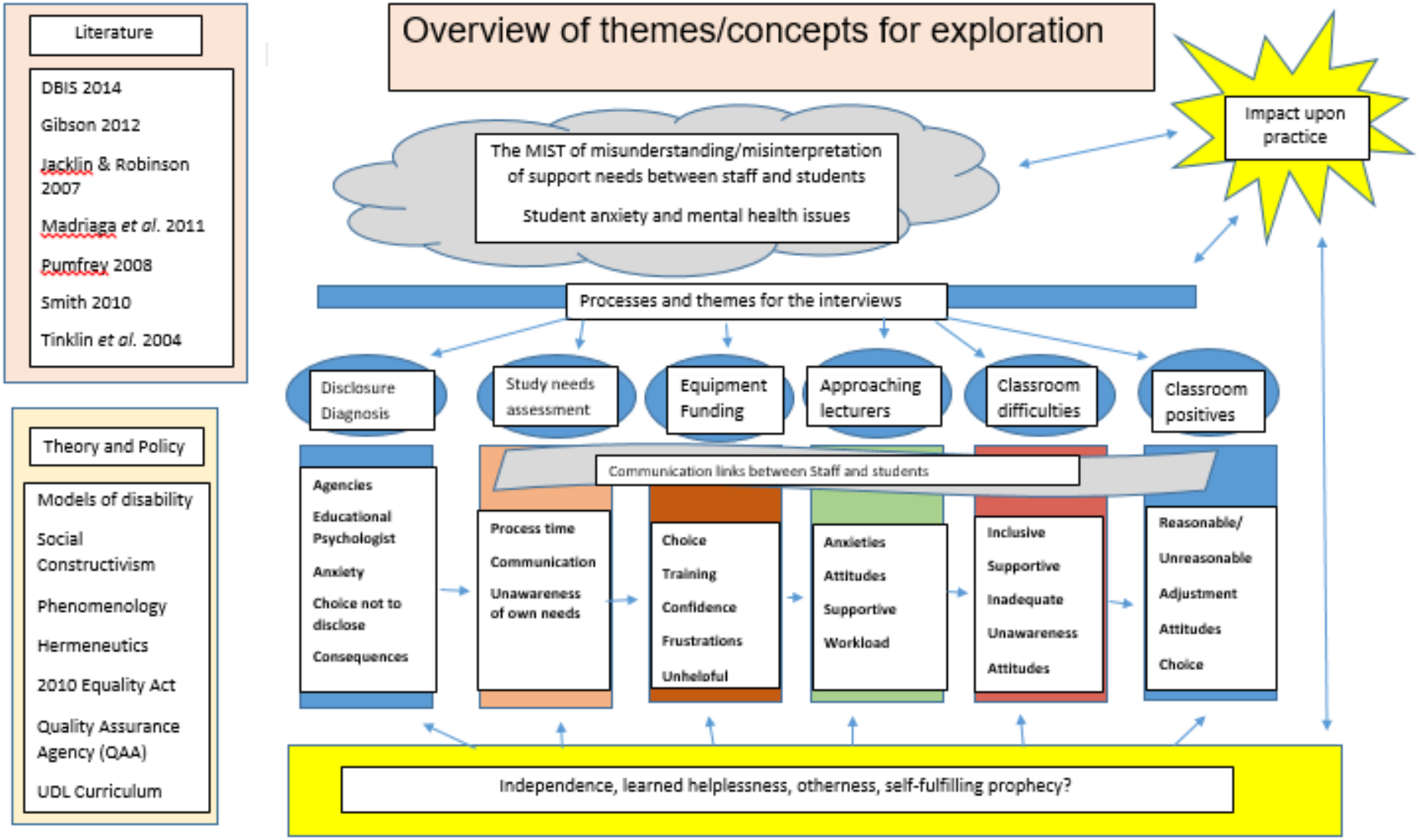

Figure two Conceptual framework for the study

Chapter 4 The findings, analysis and discussion

4.1 Introduction

The next stage of the study presents the findings, analysis and discussion from the interviews. Due to the phenomenological nature of the study and the focus on lived experiences, the chapter includes a wide range of quotations taken directly from the students. These are analysed and theorised within the chapter in order to ensure the study has remained as authentic and as close to the student voice as possible. The study has sought to demonstrate as fully and deeply as possible, the complexity involved in the 'lived experiences' of each student (Gibson 2012) alongside my own interpretations of the situations as they were experienced.

The research questions of the study have explored disabled students' lived experiences on the learning support they receive for their disability with emphasis on the following themes (see conceptual framework on page 81 for more detail):

- the diagnosis and disclosure of a disability;
- the Study Needs Assessment;
- the management of equipment and resources provided;
- the challenges of approaching lecturers;
- lived experiences of support in the classroom.

The study so far has involved the analysis of a strong theoretical and legislative basis for the equality of opportunity in education and the legal obligations for ensuring inclusive practice and reasonable adjustments were made where necessary (Smith 2010). The methodology provided a phenomenological framework with a foundation for lived experiences and the interpretation of such experiences which are relayed throughout this section. This chapter considers how such theory and policy alongside the findings from the sample supports inclusive practice in the focus university.

This chapter also provides discussion of the themes outlined in the conceptual framework (Figure two). These themes included disclosure,

diagnosis; the study needs assessment, study equipment, difficulties in the classroom, the challenges of approaching lecturers and positive experiences for disabled students in the HE classroom.

Further themes emerged during analysis which included themes such as asymmetries of power (Pantazidou and Gaventa 2016; Sidelinger *et al.* 2012) and learned helplessness in disabled students. These were found between lecturers and students and caused students to experience feelings of powerlessness (Beauchamp-Pryor 2012b; Richards and Armstrong 2008) and potentially, learned helplessness (Seligman 2006). The additional themes emerged as a result of analysing and grouping key themes together and by looking in depth at the words the students used to describe their lived experiences. Once the different points were reviewed the additional themes were identified. The literature suggested disabled students often felt oppressed and powerless (Beauchamp-Pryor 2012b; Allan 2010a; Richards and Armstrong 2008; Gosling 2007; Albert 2004). However, the knowledge gained from analysis suggested that although the students in this sample had experienced powerlessness momentarily (Seligman 2006), the majority had independently worked out an alternative support for themselves. There were concerns however, for disabled students who were experiencing anxiety or severe depression as they may not have responded as well.

The findings included discussion around the 'multiple realities' (Guest *et al.* 2013:6) and opinions provided by the students experiencing complex situations. Some student experiences involved individual strengths in terms of student independence and personal strategies to support learning. Other experiences involved student concern and disappointment in regard to the way an alternative provision was put into place. Each student relayed a different lived experience from their personal perspective which means the findings contain a range of multiple truths, interpretations and understandings in terms of individual rights. This linked the findings to the methodological and epistemological stance of inclusion and hermeneutic phenomenology.

The findings are divided into three sections:

Section one gives an overview of the student sample to provide some context of each participant.

Section two considers the lived experiences of disabled students and their communication with peers and the Student Wellbeing Service in terms of disclosure of a disability, diagnosis of disability and the SNA.

Section three reports on the lived experiences of disabled students upon approaching lecturers to discuss their support plan. This also includes the lived experiences of teaching, learning and assessment in a HE classroom.

4.1.1 Section one – The profiles of the sample

The sample included fourteen full time students studying at the focus university. The disabilities the students identified with included: Dyslexia, Dyspraxia, Bi-Polar, ME and Epilepsy. Two students also experienced a so called 'comorbidity of disability' whereby they experienced more than one disability at a time. This included either dyslexia and dyspraxia or Bi polar and bone disease. All students were in possession of a LSP provided by the focus university.

As a means of providing contextual data the following section comprises of a brief introduction to the students who participated in the study. Please note pseudonyms have been used to ensure anonymity and confidentiality.

Bev
At the time of data collection, Bev (age 30) was a mature student who was studying in the second year of a joint honours degree, studying Education Studies and Business management. Bev had a support plan for a spinal injury that caused her a great amount of pain but for which she did not display any outward physical symptoms.

Ann
At the time of data collection, Ann (age 21) was studying in the third year of a single honours degree in Education Studies. Ann had previously been diagnosed with dyspraxia during her compulsory schooling, however, she had been diagnosed with dyslexia rather than dyspraxia by the focus university.

Jane
At the time of data collection, Jane (age 23) was in the third year of a joint honours degree, studying Education Studies and Early Childhood Studies. Jane had transferred from two other subjects due to a range of difficulties involving her diagnosed epilepsy and anxiety which she had not disclosed until her transfer into her current subjects.

Ellie
At the time of data collection, Ellie (age 30) was a January starter who was studying modules from both stage two and three during this year. Ellie was a joint honours student studying Education Studies and Creative Writing. Ellie had been diagnosed with dyslexia and anxiety.

Linda
At the time of data collection, Linda (age 48) was a mature student in the third year of studying a joint honours degree in Theatre Studies and Education Studies. Linda who worked as an assistant head in a primary school had been diagnosed with Visual impairment and /dyslexia.

Susan
At the time of data collection, Susan (age 31) was a mature student studying the third year of an Education Studies single honours degree. Susan had been diagnosed with dyslexia during her compulsory school years but had experienced many difficulties with gaining access to the course which had caused her to be excluded on numerous occasions due to her behaviour.

Nyanda
At the time of data collection, Nyanda (age 30) was a mature student with a Jamaican upbringing studying the second year of a single honours degree in Education Studies. The pressures from home of doing well in her studies were very strong. Nyanda had been diagnosed with dyspraxia and dyslexia.

Mike
At the time of data collection, Mike (age 33) was in the second year of an Education Studies degree and had been diagnosed with Dyslexia. Mike had experienced difficulties with dyslexia throughout college and had self-diagnosed himself until a LSP had been provided.

Kirsty
At the time of data collection, Kirsty (age 30) was a mature student who was studying in the first year of an Education Studies and Business Management degree as a joint honours student. Kirsty had been diagnosed with a bone disease for which she was heavily medicated, although this was hidden to the public. She was also Bi Polar.

Simone
At the time of data collection Simone (age 19) was studying in the first year of an Education Studies degree. Simone had been diagnosed with dyslexia during her compulsory school years.

Carl
At the time of data collection, Carl (age 56) was a mature student who was in the second year of a joint honours degree in Education Studies, Sociology and Business management. Carl had been diagnosed with dyslexia during his time at university. His difficulties in reading and writing had also been picked up through his own self-diagnosis during training events in the workplace.

Ruth
At the time of data collection, Ruth (age 19) was in the first year of an Education Studies singe honours degree. Ruth had been diagnosed with Myalgic Encephalomyelitis (ME) during her compulsory school years. Although the ME affected Ruth physically and emotionally this was hidden to the public.

Alison
At the time of data collection, Alison (age 21) was in the third year of a single honours Education Studies degree and had been diagnosed with Dyspraxia as a child. Alison was unaware of what the characteristics were of dyspraxia but knew that she had difficulties in moving around and organising herself.

Demi
At the time of data collection, Demi (age 21) was in stage two of an Education Studies degree. Demi had been diagnosed with dyspraxia during her compulsory schooling years.

The following table provides an overview of the sample for quick reference.

4.1.2 Summary of the participants:

Student	Stage of degree	Age	Ethnicity	Disability	Place disability identified	Type of degree
Kirsty	1	30	W/British	Bi Polar Bone disease	College	JHS
Ruth	1	19	W/British	ME	School	EDS
Simone	1	19	W/British	Dyslexia	School	EDS
Bev	2	30	W/British	Spinal injury	University	JHS
Carl	2	56	W/British	Dyslexia	University	JHS
Demi	2	21	W/British	Dyspraxia	School	EDS
Mike	2	33	W/British	Dyslexia	University	EDS
Nyanda	2	30	Jamaican	Dyspraxia Dyslexia	College	EDS
Ellie	2/3	30	W/British	Dyslexia Anxiety	School	JHS
Alison	3	21	W/British	Dyspraxia	School	EDS
Ann	3	21	W/British	Dyslexia	University	EDS
Jane	3	23	W/British	Epilepsy Anxiety	School	JHS
Linda	3	48	W/British	Dyslexia	University	JHS
Susan	3	31	W/British	Dyslexia	School	EDS

Table five - Codes of reference: EDS = Education Studies single honours
JHS = Joint Honours Scheme

Initial findings from table four

- the majority of students have an identification of dyslexia 8 out 14
- the majority of students are white British 13 out of 14 and female 12 out of 14
- there is a good mix between single honours (8) and Joint Honours (6)
- there is also a good combination of age groups with 5 students falling with the 'traditional' age for university students, (19-21), 1 student in the 22 - 29 age bracket, 6 students in the 30 – 39 age bracket and 2 students in the over 40 age bracket

- the findings recognised the sample did not represent all subjects studied at the focus university
- the study had, however, taken place in an area where best practice was often recognised and used to provide examples of good practice within the university.

The response to the call for participants to take part in the study showed a variety of hidden disability with dyslexia appearing to be the most often disclosed disability. The statistics provided by the DBIS (2014) evidenced the ratio of students with dyslexia tended to outweigh students with alternative disabilities with 47% of disabled students in HE shown to have dyslexia, (10.2%) presenting with a longstanding heath issue and (9.5%) presenting with a mental health issue. This related well to this study where the sample of 14 students demonstrated that 8 students had disclosed their dyslexia. This related to Tinklin, Riddell and Wilson (2004) who found a large proportion of students had disclosed dyslexia with fewer numbers disclosing a range of alternative disabilities. The other disabilities found in the sample for this study and in the statistics from the DBIS were thought to be less common in HE as a whole, but were mostly found and recognised as hidden disabilities in the Equality Act of 2010.

4.2 Section two Disabled students' lived experiences of disclosure, diagnosis, the Study Needs Assessment and the provision of assistive technologies.

4.2.1 The identification of a disability

The findings show six students were formally identified during the early stages of studying in HE and eight students had been identified with a disability whilst in compulsory schooling.

The six students who received a diagnosis for their disability during their time in HE had been advised by their peers or lecturers to see if identification could be made to support their difficulties in the classroom. Prior to the identification of a disability, the following students had suggested they were aware that:

> ‘*Something wasn’t right…’* or that they *‘had a feeling’* (Linda, stage 3 Visual impairment/dyslexia) that something was wrong.

Linda had been attending lectures and had felt concerned she was not keeping up with the pace of the class sessions. After following the advice of a peer, Linda shared her realisation of a potential disability:

> *I was 46 years old… I just knew that I wasn’t doing well, I just couldn’t work it out and I just didn’t know why I was finding it difficult… I knew that my… son was dyslexic, and I’ve seen countless kids taking a dyslexic test but never thought about it for myself… and then I thought… you know what, this is probably you (Linda, stage 3 JHS Visual impairment/dyslexia).*

Mike was also aware he had difficulties but his full realisation came during the access course prior to his HE course:

> *I went on an access course and that is when I first asked for the assessment… I went through the initial one and then a few months down the line I went for the big test… I had a feeling that maybe I had… cos I had so much difficulty with spelling and I hated reading out loud and… I actually said to them at the access, can I have an assessment? As opposed to them going… you need an assessment... That was me, I was just like, there must be something here because I can’t pick this up and then obviously you do a little bit of research when you struggle with this that and the other and you think well maybe… so I, I just asked them and then I got put through… (Mike, stage 2 EDS dyslexia).*

Carl also had some suspicions he may have dyslexia whilst being involved in training members of staff in the workplace:

> *Oh I’d suspected through me role… we do some basic training with union reps… and part of the stuff we do is screening…. And when I did that I was coming up kind of border line… so I took the screening although I wasn’t sure I was dyslexic (Carl, stage 2 JHS dyslexia).*

Each of the above students had disclosed a potential disability and found that identification for support was put into place during their access course or during the first year of their HE course.

Over half of the students (9) interviewed were mature students who were in

employment or were bringing up families alongside their studies in university. The students revealed they were used to making all kinds of decisions about life both at home and/or in the workplace. The majority of students suggested they had not encountered any real difficulties in everyday life to the extent they were now experiencing in the HE classroom. It was interesting to note that three of the participants (Linda, Carl and Mike) had 'suspected' there was something different about the way they were trying to learn and this had led them to ask questions and to seek advice from friends, lecturers or support workers within the university:

> *I made an appointment with Student Wellbeing and said look I think I need testing for dyslexia, but that was because I made contact with another student… and he said I would get tested for dyslexia if I was you and I said why, and he said I just would if I were you… (Linda, stage 3 JHS Visual impairment/dyslexia)*

The study found 8 students had already been identified with a disability prior to enrolling in HE. These students disclosed their disability on application to HE where there was a section indicated on the UCAS application form. This enabled the students to receive some form of support right from the start of their degree. Early disclosure provided opportunities for early enrolment and workshops such as 'Get Ahead' which were run by the Student Wellbeing Service in order to support disabled students in settling into the first stage of their degree. This early support is well known in HE and was referred to by Light and Cox (2001:186) as support that was designed to enable students to have a 'more secure sense of personal identity'. The workshops were viewed as an 'essential aspect [to] developing [the] independence' of disabled students' (Light and Cox, 2001:186)

The findings show that some students who had been diagnosed with a disability before entering HE, only had limited knowledge about their disability or how the disability might affect their learning:

> *I was originally diagnosed way back… probably in reception or year one… that was the only assessment I had up until first year of uni where they automatically said they wanted to update…. (Alison, stage 3 EDS Dyspraxia)*

During the interview, Alison talked of times when she was showing visitors around the university and had laughed as she talked of her clumsiness or how she fell over invisible objects. She was aware that she could get confused and often forgot where she was supposed to be going:

> *I think I am the most clumsiest person there is… definitely… like even now, my housemates will say that there is not one day when I can walk on a flat pavement and I somehow trip over myself [giggles…] My sense of direction is awful, I mean I can tell left to right, but if you like put me in a new place I will not remember where to go…I am awful with directions… (Alison, stage 3 EDS Dyspraxia).*

The understanding that she was clumsy and often disorganised was the extent of the understanding Alison had about her disability. Alison had refused support because she thought she could manage without it; although she realised her assignments took her much longer to write than her peers due to her difficulties in organising herself.

Demi had also disclosed dyspraxia and was unsure what the characteristics were connected to this disability. She knew what she felt but could not explain it:

> *'It's mild dyspraxia… when I was younger it was called ligament laxity meaning that I lack energy, it takes me longer to do certain things… it takes me a little bit longer to understand I think'… my mother sat me down because we were talking about my brother and she said, oh you are mildly dyspraxic as well and I thought it was something like autism because I knew my brother had autism but I didn't know what it was'. (Demi, stage 2 EDS dyspraxia)*

According to Webster (2013) dyspraxia may coexist with autism suggesting that the individual may experience difficulty in social situations which was prevalent with autism and difficulty with motor coordination which relates to dyspraxia. Both conditions were considered to be neurological but presented in different
ways. Demi believed she had similar characteristics to her brother and believed she may well also have had autism.

For most students, such as Linda, Mike, Carl and Demi an identification or diagnosis of disability had been reached easily. On the other hand, for Ann

the diagnosis of a disability had been more problematic. Identification or the acceptance of an identified disability was found to be more difficult when there was a debate over which disability the student actually had:

> *I have had a statement for all of my school life, but it was actually for dyspraxia not dyslexia…, so I went in… I had to do this test which cost me £50… to get me known as being dyspraxic… I was very very bad with it when I was little, so that I probably wouldn't be able to go to a mainstream school but here I am… and so, I originally wanted to be properly diagnosed… for dyspraxia, but they said actually that I didn't have dyspraxia… I am dyslexic, but my dad is trained in dyslexia and he says that no, I am dyspraxic. So it's a bit of a conflict. (Ann, stage 3 EDS dyslexia)*

Ann was coming to the end of her degree and had not wanted to argue with the identification of dyslexia given during the first stage of her degree, even though this had caused her to feel awkward and uncomfortable. Ann suggested she was confused with the identification of dyslexia as she believed she had been supported through her school years for dyspraxia. Fawcett (2016) from the British Dyslexia Association suggested there was a high overlap between dyslexia and dyspraxia and explained dyspraxia and dyslexia were almost interchangeable as they could both involve reading and writing disorders. Ann suggested she was:

> *'not very good at punctuation and not very good at words and structuring and stuff…' (Ann, stage 3 EDS dyslexia)*

This suggested being identified with dyslexia was likely to be valid, however, Ann was confused and concerned that she may not have the correct provision in place. Ann had been provided with a support worker, a Dictaphone and a variety of software. She believed she also needed a note taker as this had helped her during compulsory education in school:

> *'They said it was either or… and now that I have the Dictaphone they couldn't give me a scribe...' (Ann, stage 3 EDS dyslexia)*

Weedon (2012:54) informed how in early schooling there was an almost 'instinctive inclusivity' demonstrated by teachers. This meant each child was 'seen as unique' and each teacher viewed inclusivity as 'part of the teacher's craft' to ensure each child's learning needs were catered for whether an

identification was in place or not. Although Ann did not mention an official diagnosis taking place during her compulsory schooling years, it appeared there was sufficient provision in place to meet her early learning needs. This suggested the naming of impairment was probably less relevant during Ann's compulsory schooling.

Upon considering Ann's confusion about her disability it could be assumed that the school and home had possibly created a socially constructed environment in order to manage Ann's disability (Shakespeare 2004). Ann also mentioned her father was a Special Needs Coordinator and specialised in dyslexia and believed she had dyspraxia. This could be interpreted to mean Ann's father was aware of a range of characteristics that may have been linked to dyspraxia during this time period. Putting this situation into the context of time, which may have fallen around a decade ago, the Lamb report (2009:2) highlighted parents' dissatisfaction with the special needs systems within schools. Lamb (2009) referred to 'warrior parents' who were at odds with the school system and who were demanding diagnosis and support for their children. Lamb (2009) lamented on how parents and practitioners had to fight for the support they believed their child had a right to. It was possible Ann's father had been involved as a warrior parent and practitioner in seeking support for Ann's needs. It was evident the compulsory schooling years had supported Ann in developing her thoughts around an identity for dyspraxia (Bauman 1990) which had contributed to her concerns at this point.

The concern here was that on applying to HE and receiving an official diagnosis for dyslexia Ann may have had to reshape her thinking of who she was in terms of her new social status as a person with dyslexia rather than a person with dyspraxia. Tremain (2005) on considering Foucault's (1982) explanations of bio power and the subjectifying and subjugating of a disabled person referred to the gradual transference of a disabled person into a new social environment. Tremain (2005) informed how the 'subject' or disabled person, in this case, was likely to have experienced the consistent control or dependence of a familiar environment for a period of time. This was evident in Ann's experience of compulsory schooling. Tremain (2005) suggested the 'subject' may also have been connected to their own identity by the

consciousness of self-knowledge. This also related to Ann's situation as she was very comfortable with her diagnosis of dyspraxia. Tremain (2005) referring to Foucault (1982) suggested that by exploring the subject's consciousness it may be possible to understand how the person was gradually transferring into their new social environment. Consciously Ann appeared to be carrying on with her studies and doing well, although she discussed how concerned she was that she may not have been doing as well as she had hoped she would. Ann felt too shy to ask for help which could have involved some counselling to support her transition emotionally and self-consciously.

Pirttimaa, Takala and Ladonlahti (2015) discussed how receiving a diagnosis, or in this case a change in diagnosis for a disability, could be very difficult for adult students. This was mainly because the students had been used to managing their everyday lives and were likely to have 'created compensatory strategies' to help themselves through such life experiences. They suggested most adults found they could adapt to new experiences and different ways of living and learning over a period of time. Piaget (1950) informed that new knowledge from experiences could be assimilated and accommodated into prior learning experiences and used to construct support people to adapt to their new environment or situation (Gibbs and Tang 2011). Sutherland (1999) also referring to constructivism suggested though, that if the new knowledge or experience caused awkwardness or discomfort, it could cause a person to experience what Piaget termed as disequilibrium. This was a feeling of imbalance that usually needed to be rectified before the person could move on in confidence. It was this process of adaptation that may have affected Ann in her situation. Students such as Linda, Alison and Carl may have also experienced discomfort in a new learning situation and this could have contributed to them seeking support in the first place. Such difficulties could be considered to be complex due to individual needs and experiences and may if not managed carefully have become the cause behind depression and learned helplessness (Seligman 2006) which is alluded to in some of the following sections.

This section concluded that some students may have limited knowledge

about their disability and may not have understood fully how the disability affected their learning. It was found important to educate students about the disability in order to help them understand what support they may have needed. Where there was a change in diagnosis and potential identity issues, an exploration would have been helpful to ensure the provision was helpful.

4.2.2 Student experiences on disclosing their disability

The findings suggested most students were comfortable with disclosing their disability on application to university and to me during the interviews, for example:

> *I have a physical disability that involves three bone diseases in every bone of my body… I have mobility issues… I can't write for long… I take a lot of painkillers; I don't have much stamina… I need extra time to get from A – B. (Kirsty, stage one JHS BiPolar/bone disease)*

> *I've got erm... a degenerative disc disease in my lower spine so I struggle with concentration because of the pain. (Bev, stage 2 JHS Spinal injury)*

> *My disability is Myalgic… or something. [Myalgic Encephalomyelitis or ME] it causes like… lack of memory and concentration and muscle aches and headaches and dizziness and… everything really (Ruth, stage 1 EDS ME)*

Whilst the majority of students did not have any problem with disclosing their hidden disabilities upon application to university, Jane and Mike, demonstrated two very different situations and reasons as to why a student may choose not to disclose a disability.

Firstly, Jane (stage 3 JHS Epilepsy) discussed why she had not initially disclosed her disability on application to university. Her reasoning appeared to revolve around the fact she wanted to leave her disability behind her and prove to herself she could manage without support:

> *'I didn't disclose my condition to anybody… which probably didn't help at all because no one knew why I was missing the lectures' (Jane, stage 3 JHS Epilepsy).*

Jane had been diagnosed with epilepsy whilst at school and believed her experiences of epilepsy during the compulsory school years had been somewhat difficult. This was due mainly to the unawareness of teachers and peers of how to support Jane when she had a seizure or how to manage her aftercare:

> *When it came to A levels I had a fit in the morning of my history exam and I went and sat it… and it took me… hours to write this exam. The support from that teacher was awful he wrote a letter to my parents saying… I couldn't carry on because I hadn't sat the exam... even though I was in a separate room on my own... (Jane, stage 3 JHS Epilepsy)*

After a short period of frequent seizures causing Jane to be absent from school, Jane again experienced difficulties with her teachers and peers:

> *After returning to school it was like the teachers were saying "well she's not here again, oh I bet she's skiving off" and it turned out my friends were starting to feel the same… well, so called friends… I remember walking in and they went "oh what's your excuse this week?" And I was like... cos I'd been off for like two days, then I'd be back in, then I'd be off again and I think I went for about 6 months and I didn't have a full week at school (Jane, stage 3 JHS Epilepsy).*

Most of what Jane experienced at school appeared to be connected to her lecturer's limited understanding of the characteristics of epilepsy (Bishop and Boag 2005). In particular there appeared to have been limited understanding of the accompanying cognitive difficulties experienced whilst the brain was rebooting itself after a seizure (Young Epilepsy 2015). The interpretation of Jane's reasoning for not disclosing her disability initially on application to HE may have been because she believed she could manage the condition herself. The knowledge she may not need to attend classes in HE as regularly as school was possibly a means to disguise her disability. This may have worked well until the effects of epileptic seizures, such as headaches and short term memory problems started to take effect on her attendance and the future of her place on the course:

I think I just wanted to prove to myself that I could do it without anybody knowing… and then there was my dad that said "no, you need to go and tell someone now, because there's support out there that you are entitled to that you're not getting. So go and get it"… Its admitting that you've actually got something that … it limits you, rather, like it's kind of… like it happens to everyone else... not me… (Jane, stage 3 JHS Epilepsy).

'I get really horrendous migraines as well, I mean [I sent] an email saying that I'm not coming in… the perception was that 'she's not coming in because she's got a hangover, or she got a headache' but they weren't aware that the headaches went with seizures' (Jane, stage 3 JHS Epilepsy).

According to Santuzzi (2013) some students chose not to disclose a disability, often because they did not wish to experience the perceived stigma attached to a disability. The concept of stigma was considered by Appelqvist-Schmidlechner *et al.* (2016:39) to be a 'power-dependent phenomenon which consisted of labelling, stereotyping, cognitive separation, emotional reactions, loss of status and discrimination. Moreover Santuzzi (2013) suggested the reason behind not disclosing a disability may have been because the decision to disclose a disability could weigh heavily on a person's own perceptions of themselves. This meant the student may have been concerned about how they viewed themselves and how different they may have appeared to others in the new environment (Appelqvist-Schmidlechner *et al.* 2016). Such perceptions may have involved a view of the self in terms of ability or the desire for a student to be able to prove to themselves and to the world how they could manage the disability without support.

According to Kirwan and Leather (2011:37) there were many students who chose not to disclose their disability because they felt anxious, frustrated or even angry 'about not being able to perform to a standard, that in their [minds] they felt they could achieve'. The neo-liberalist context within HE, according to Wilkins and Burke (2015) suggested that students should be independent in their studies and be able to make choices and be empowered towards self-responsibility over such studies. Students developing within a neo-liberalist society are most likely to have been taught how they need to align themselves towards future employment as part of the competitive market. However, by choosing not to disclose her epilepsy this meant the

Student Wellbeing Service was not aware of Jane's needs, neither were her lecturers. This also meant there was probably limited inclusive support in place to help Jane with her learning difficulties during or after a seizure. There may also have been limited understanding for the lecturer or peers of Jane's cognitive difficulties (Reilly and Fenton, 2013) whilst recovering from a seizure. Kirwan and Leather (2011:37) alluded to anxiety and fear as potential contributors in terms of a system that might isolate a student and in this case, caused them to be terminated from their course. Unfortunately the decision to avoid disclosure did result in Jane having to transfer to another course.

Jane mentioned later in the interview that she was worried because she had not known who she needed to talk to after a difficult meeting with her programme leader and lecturers. Such behaviour could have been an indication towards potential learned helplessness if not managed well. Although the indications of Jane's helplessness related to Seligman's (2006) research whereby she appeared to have not acted as quickly as would have been expected; she had not allowed herself to remain in a helpless state for long. On the other hand, Merton's (1948:195) research suggested there was evidence of a self-fulfilling prophecy involved in this situation. Subconsciously Jane may have been sabotaging herself by not initially disclosing her disability. It appeared though, from the interpretation, that Jane had found strategies to overcome the earlier setbacks of her lived experience in HE. This included talking to lecturers and gaining a place on a more accommodating course. This was interesting because Jane may have been a potential student at the risk of learned helplessness, however, she could be seen to be trying to work things out for herself (although rather belated), as a proactive and independent student. Jane appeared to have managed the dilemma in her own way and with her own self-determination which meant learned helplessness was not an issue.

Another dilemma around disclosure was found with Mike who had disclosed his dyslexia to the Student Wellbeing Service but who had not actually discussed his LSP with his lecturer. Mike had an LSP that indicated he needed class handouts printing on blue paper. After managing for some time

with white paper handouts, Mike had plucked up the courage to disclose his dyslexia to the lecturer and ask for handouts to be printed on blue paper. The lecturer had listened to Mike and dutifully provided a blue overlay for him to use rather than providing handouts on blue paper. This may have been cost effective, however, the issue arose for Mike when the lecturer singled him out and presented him with the blue overlay in full view of his peers.

> *I mean they ask if people want it but the thing with coloured paper it's kind of like… this student's dyslexic here you go…… and it's just like they gave me like a blue overlay… and every time I pulled it out I felt like... like it was a massive arrow pointing at me… and it's just… one part of that test of being dyslexic (Mike, stage 2 EDS Dyslexia).*

This situation related to Barer's (2007) research where he informed that if the disclosure of disability was not handled appropriately, this could cause an embarrassment for both the student and the teaching staff involved. Mike did not want to pursue the situation any further and consequently suggested he was not:

> *'Bothered about that… I don't kick up a fuss because… it doesn't tend to bother me that much and I don't want to get shown up anyway' (Mike, stage 2 EDS Dyslexia).*

Mike's lived experience of support in the classroom also related to Kirwan and Leather's (2011:38) study where they suggested participants could feel 'reluctant to talk about their difficulties because they [believed they would be] misunderstood'. Although the lecturer in Mike's experience was well meaning, and wanted to provide the appropriate inclusive provision to support Mike, he believed that more discretion was needed around his disclosure.

Both Jane and Mike had encountered different experiences around the disclosure of a disability. In both experiences there were opportunities for inclusive practice, however, due to either the omission of a disclosure on the part of the student, or a disclosure that had been misunderstood by the lecturer, both students had encountered difficulties. This raised the question as to whether disclosing a disability had a positive impact upon a student's

learning and may be one of the reasons why some students chose not to disclose their disability. The next section gives further information on the process of disclosure and the system used by the focus university to ensure support was in place for disabled students.

4.2.3 Students' lived experiences on their Study Needs Assessment interview (SNA)

The SNA takes place after a disclosure or a diagnosis of a disability has been made by a professional employed by the HE institution. The Disabled Student Allowance (DSA) (Gov.uk 2016) informed that funding could be applied for by a student who had been diagnosed with a disability. According to the DBIS (2014:14) all students who have disclosed a disability were 'required to have a post 16 diagnostic assessment' of their disability before being eligible for DSA funding. The DBIS (2014) also informed the 'tools of the diagnostic assessment indicate the level of [the] student's impairment' and was used to identify the appropriate funding needed to support the student adequately in their learning. The provision available for the disabled student was then discussed during the SNA.

The findings from the study suggested the majority of students found the process of disclosure, the diagnostic testing and the SNA followed an uncomplicated process. This was because eight students had already been diagnosed with a disability whilst they were in school or college. This meant the process of disclosure for provision or support for these students was seen merely as a way of updating their LSP for HE:

> *I was originally diagnosed way back… I think I was probably [in] reception/year one but that was the only one that I had, up until the first year of uni, where they automatically just… said they wanted to update… (Alison, stage 3 EDS Dyspraxia)*

The SNA was simple for Alison as she already had a diagnosis of dyspraxia and there was no change in the diagnosis. She was provided with a support worker, however, no further support was needed and she happily carried on with her studies.

A complex situation occurred for Linda who had been identified with dyslexia and visual impairment at the university. During her SNA interview, Linda was still trying to get her head around the idea that she had been identified as having dyslexia and a visual impairment and was being asked what support she needed:

> *You don't actually know what you need. So you are reliant on that SNA to say you need this and this….* (Linda, stage 3, JHS Visual impairment/dyslexia)

The main difficulty arose when Linda eventually agreed to some support, but was unsure if she was agreeing to support that would help her:

> *I got a Dictaphone and that's helpful but I could have done with a note taker as well. What she said was… [the woman in Student Wellbeing services] which do you think would be best for you? And I said, I have no idea. I really don't know. Then she said, "Well I recommend this… [a Dictaphone]. Because I recorded everything… I couldn't tell what he (the lecturer) was saying, so, yes, the note taker would have been valuable. I went back to them [Student Wellbeing] and said that and they said that because I had had my assessment so close, there was no way [of adding a note taker]. (Linda, Stage 3 JHS Visual impairment/dyslexia)*

According to Linda, when she returned for further support because the Dictaphone was unhelpful, she found the support could not be changed because her funding had been spent. Linda's perception was that she had been guided toward equipment that was not useful to her. Linda shared her annoyance at not being able to access the support she believed she really needed and believed she had a right to.

I could sense Linda's frustration and the emotion in her voice as she relayed her experience and her annoyance that she could not return to negotiate the support she believed she needed. Arguably the medical model of disability (see section 2.6) had been satisfied according to Houghton (2005) in that a diagnosis had been managed medically, and that resources in the form of a Dictaphone (and a support worker) had been provided. According to HEFCE (1999) requirements, it would appear the minimum provision had been put

into place to support Linda. The Dictaphone, however, was not meeting Linda's needs and so her individual needs were not actually being met. This also related to Shakespeare's (2004) point around the need to recognise the individual needs and experiences of disabled people. The issue that funding had been spent did not make sense to Linda, however, as this suggested the cost of a Dictaphone would be substantially less than the cost of a note taker and funding should still be left over. As the funding was no longer available, Linda assumed the funding balance originally allocated to her must have been transferred to support another student. Similarly, Ann whose dilemma with her change in diagnosis was discussed earlier also had difficulty in gaining the support she believed she needed in the SNA. Ann had also been given the choice of a note taker or a Dictaphone and had chosen the Dictaphone because she was unsure what support she would need in HE, although she had received a note taker in school. Upon returning to change her support she reported that:

> *'They said it was either or… and now that I have the Dictaphone they couldn't give me a [note taker]...' (Ann, stage 3 EDS dyslexia)*

The concern was that both Linda and Ann had been offered a choice in support however, because they were unsure what support they needed, they accepted a resource (minimum provision (HEFCE 1999)), that could not be changed. Although they did not know at this point that they could not exchange their support.

The Dictaphones were not meeting the students' needs:

> *I [didn't] have time, just to listen to [the lecture] again (Ann, stage 3 EDS, Dyslexia).*

An interpretation of the data informed that the Dictaphone could be considered to be a token support (Skelton 2005) given to disabled students in order to 'heal' their difficulty of making notes. It was such tokenistic and simplistic views around the provision used for disabled people that Shakespeare (2004:18) argued against. He suggested disability involved a 'complex field of physical and mental difficulties' that needed to be addressed

individually. In relation to this, Miesenberger, Klaus, Wolfgang and Karshmer's (2010:435) research found that many institutions had moved to tokenistic approaches after the introduction of the DDA (1995) and provided only 'general alternatives' for disabled students. Although the HEFCE (1999) had declared that a minimum provision be put into place, there did not appear to be any 'subtlety or understanding for [students' individual] needs' which was what these students had been experiencing (Miesenberger *et al*. 2010:435). This also related to the oppression experienced by disabled people that Beauchamp-Pryor (2012b and Allan 2010a/b) referred to, and as such the disadvantage felt by these students had not been recognised. Burke (2012) suggested the economic agenda underpinned by neo-liberal discourse would be seeking to ensure underrepresented groups were found opportunities within HE, however, it would appear that disabled students could be bypassed or provided only the bare minimum in terms of provision. This echoes Madriaga et al's (2011) point about the focus on implementing regulations in a climate where 'inclusion' as a principle was related to human rights and where belonging was hard to realise in a neoliberal audit culture (Radice 2013).

A discussion with a member of staff in the Student Wellbeing Service helped to clarify the above situations. I was informed that disabled students were assessed on the levels of severity in their disability. For example, a student with a milder form of dyslexia would always be offered a Dictaphone rather than a note taker. Students who had a note taker usually had other underlying disabilities or a more severe form of dyslexia. This information related well to the DBIS report (2014:36) report which informed that 'an analysis to understand the levels of support' would have been undertaken to ascertain the levels of funding needed by each student requiring support. This meant a note taker was provided for students depending on the severity of the dyslexia or whether another disability was affecting them, for example, their eyesight or hearing. What was annoying for Linda and Ann was that they had been initially offered a note taker but were later, according to the students' account, refused such an opportunity.

The data demonstrated that Linda's experience of seeking support had not

met her learning needs. Although she did not know what support she needed, she had assumed the support worker would recommend resources to her based on the diagnosis of her visual impairment and dyslexia. Linda knew the basics of how to manage dyslexia for other people, having worked around children with dyslexia in a primary school classroom. She talked of putting together a range of resources for the primary school children she supported with their learning. However, on finding she had dyslexia herself, she felt confused as to what she needed:

> *I didn't know what I needed; I hadn't got a clue (Linda, stage 3 JHS Visual impairment/dyslexia).*

I found it interesting that Linda did not know what she needed to help her to learn. It was almost as if she had shifted from being an independent, proactive mature student into a dependent student waiting for somebody to step in and put things right for her. Although this would not be considered to be learned helplessness as such (Seligman 2006), the mentality of such a shift from independence to feeling lost was a concern. Linda had been diagnosed with two conditions and was worried about her diagnosis:

> *When you are having that assessment… I was in such shock that I had two learning disabilities… and it's quite official, quite scary… I am not easily scared! (Linda, stage 3 EDS visual impairment/dysleixa)*

Linda was frustrated with herself and felt she had let herself down because she had made a bad decision in not choosing to have a note taker and then being expected to manage her situation independently. She believed she had made a decision about something she had very limited understanding about. Linda felt cheated because she could not exchange the Dictaphone for the much needed note taker. This was an interesting situation as what appeared to be happening here was a power struggle for Linda with the university support system to access the support she believed she had a right to. This is related to what Pantazidou and Gaventa (2016 and Sidelinger *et al*.2012) referred to as an asymmetry of power in terms of an imbalance of power between a lecturer and a student. This is also related to the discussion on

powerlessness that Richardson and Armstrong (2005) referred to where students sometimes had to be satisfied with the support given. Linda, however, took the stance as suggested by Gosling (2007; Lysilp 2016; Young and Quibell 2000) that students have rights and she believed she held the power as a student to receive the support that had originally been recognised. Unfortunately, her frequent pleas were denied and she was left feeling frustrated and disabled by a system that had let her down. It was almost as if the adjustment had become similar to a consumable sales discount within a shop that once the item had been bought could not be returned.

The interpretation of the findings suggested the majority of students in the study presented with some emotional turmoil as they talked through similar experiences of managing their disability in HE. The emotion in Linda's tone of voice was likely due to the way she had perceived she had been disadvantaged and disabled by the un/reasonable adjustment that was supposed to be supporting her. This brings to light again the notion of students' lived experiences as discussed by Gibson (2012; Shakespeare 2004) as to whether HEIs were really taking note of what the individual students were experiencing. Linda appeared to be strong minded and although there were some elements of helplessness (Seligman 2006), and feelings of powerlessness (Richardson and Armstrong, 2005) her determination, independence and aspirations were strong enough to help her avoid any thoughts of giving up.

Whilst Linda had been unsure initially about what support she needed, another student, Kirsty in contrast reported high levels of awareness and understanding about the support she needed. For example, Kirsty (stage 1 JHS) who had been diagnosed with Bi Polar and a bone disease claimed:

> *'I am very self-aware, I knew what my needs were… so the lady that interviewed me did ask really… what do you think you need? I'm confident enough to ask what's available. What are my options? And so basically I just said ok, I'll take that, and that and that'. (Kirsty, stage 1 JHS BiPolar and one disease).*

Kirsty received a Dictaphone, a note taker, a desk that could be adjusted, a chair, a laptop, a laptop stand and software for her computer. Kirsty was aware of the support process and cheerfully agreed she knew what she needed to help her in her studies. This was interesting because the majority of students in the sample had allowed the support worker to guide them during their SNA. This may have been because they believed they did not know at this point in their diagnosis what support they needed. From this example it appeared Kirsty understood her disability well and was in a better position to know what support she needed. For those students who were new to their disability, the power balance had shifted to the support worker to make the necessary decisions around provision.

The majority of students, similarly to Linda, were annoyed or disappointed that once the support and resources had been agreed, there appeared to be no way of changing the support. This relates to the potentially, hegemonic control often found within HE (Burke, Stevenson and Whelan 2015; Liasidou 2014). Interestingly Ann (stage 3 EDS Dyslexia) found the following paragraph in her LSP that suggested there was an opportunity to change support if needed. The LSP informed students that:

> *Your support plan is an ongoing, continuous document to help you throughout your time at university. If you feel there are any adjustments to be made to it, or want to discuss any aspect of your support plan, please contact the Student Wellbeing Service. (Sample from an LSP).*

Ann (stage 3 EDS Dyslexia) had pointed this paragraph out to her support worker during the first year of her degree. She was now in her third year and approaching her final semester. Ann indicated she was 'feeling disadvantaged' because she had had to manage with a Dictaphone that she rarely used. There had not been, according to Ann, any opportunities to change her support.

During a meeting with a senior member of the Student Wellbeing Service (see Appendix one) I was able to clarify the above information. I was informed that a change could be made each year as new funding was

received. I believe this was a section of the LSP the majority of students had either not understood or were not aware of. For the most part the students' interpretations suggested that once the decision had been made about the resources available in their first year at university, there were no further opportunities to change the decision. This meant the majority of disabled students in the sample were struggling throughout their degree with the understanding that the support they were receiving could not be changed. The reasonable adjustment provided appeared to the students to be an unreasonable adjustment or a non-refundable, non-exchangeable adjustment and did not follow Powell's (2003:9) argument that reasonable adjustments should meet the 'requirements' and 'enable participation by… [disabled] students'.

This section had demonstrated the need for more clarity in the process of communicating with disabled students during their SNA. There was a need also for more consistent explanation from staff on the choices of provision and the process if the provision was not helpful. The following section continues the discussion on the difficulties of Dictaphones and opens up discussion on the assistive technology that was on offer for disabled students during their SNA.

4.2.4 Student perception on Assistive Technology

The main themes coming out of student discussions on the provision of assistive technology included:

- the challenges of using Dictaphones
- the software being difficult to understand or difficult to use
- the inadequacy of training on how to use the software provided
- the difficulties of accessing a 'labelled' chair
- the benefits and challenges involved with Support workers.

The following table provides a summary of the assistive technology provided.

Equipment/software/resource	Number of students in receipt of equipment	Comments
Laptop	10	9 of these students have dyslexia
Printer	4	-
Scanner	1	-
Dictaphone	11	All dyslexic students plus two back pain sufferers
Note taker	3	2 students with severe dyslexia and 1 back sufferer
Support worker And/or Mental health worker	10 2	2 did not have a support worker
Software Dragon Fragmo read Read and write Mind map software	9 1 1 1	All students with dyslexia received software
Desk with top that moves up and down	2	For use at home
Chair	2	For use at home
Chair	1	For use in classroom
Books	2	Most only 2 students mentioned this
Extra time for assignments	14	All students
Foot rest	1	Back sufferer
Arm rests	1	Back sufferer

Table six - The sample's provision of assistive technology

4.2.5 Acquiring and using Dictaphones

Most students (11), and in particular the students with dyslexia were offered assistive technology such as a Dictaphone, a laptop and software to support their literacy skills. This met the minimum requirements as laid out by the HEFCE (1999) The majority of students (10) suggested the Dictaphone was recommended along with software to provide support for their literacy skills. It was also found that the majority of students perceived the Dictaphone initially as making life a little easier in that it provided a record of the lecture.

The students believed they would be able to use this device for information if and when they needed it, and make notes later. The students' experiences, however, of using the Dictaphone did not necessarily reflect its initial usefulness:

> *I was given a Dictaphone … I am not really very good at taking in the information …and I felt like I didn't have time as each lecture is three hours long and I don't have time, just to listen to it again (Ann, stage 3 EDS, Dyslexia).*
>
> *I did have the recorder but I didn't feel comfortable with the recorder and I feel better with a note taker (Ellie, stage 2/3 JHS, Dyslexia).*
>
> *I got a Dictaphone… I think it would have been much more easier to have a note taker than the Dictaphone because having a Dictaphone is just to record the conversations that everyone has just had, where everyone's raising their hands up and saying whatever… But a note taker [takes down] the main points of what is being said… I need to have that really (Nyanda, stage 2 EDS, Dyspraxia and Dyslexia).*

The findings suggested that whilst it was useful to be able to record a lecture and listen to it again, what the students really needed was a record of the main points of the lecture. Friedman (2013:5) suggested making notes during a lecture was considered to 'assist the learner… in processing information' and this was essentially what most students were engaged in during a lecture. For a disabled student, however, who was experiencing difficulties processing information and trying to make notes this was likely to be a challenging task. The interpretation of such experiences suggested the difficulties of trying to make notes and trying to keep up with the pace of the lecture may have contributed to some of the challenges experienced by Linda and Ann who believed they needed more support in this area.

Another area of concern around the use of Dictaphones related to lecturers denying students the opportunity to record the session even though the student had an LSP requesting this be possible:

> *I tried to record [the lecture] and the tutor wouldn't let me record it, she said that she didn't want her voice to be recorded so I couldn't. I can't actually remember going into that room and listening to whatever I listened to but she wouldn't let me… and it was the one all about what we needed to do in the assignment… And I missed it all, so… not good. I gave the tutor a copy of my support plan so they could see about recording lectures… it was there but she still said "no, I've got the right to say no and I'm saying no". So I was like…. Gosh… because I didn't know who to go to. (Jane, stage 3 JHS Epilepsy)*

This was an example of where a reasonable adjustment has been put into place, but the lecturer had used their power and authority and failed to respond to the needs of the student. There may have been a host of reasons why the lecturer had become defensive about the use of a Dictaphone or indeed the use of other technologies in the classroom. One explanation may be that the lecturer may not have been 'exposed to [or] had knowledge of the available technologies that could support students in their academic tasks (Alnahdi 2014:18). The lecturer may have felt reluctant to use technology or invite such technology into their classroom due to their own lived experiences or even inexperience with technology. Such asymmetries of power (Pantazidou and Gaventa 2016) between lecturers and students and the attitudes from lecturers towards technology would be frustrating to most students who had grown up with technology during their compulsory schooling, where technology was used widely (Lai 2011). This related to Avramidis and Skidmore (2004) who found that technology had limited use in their classrooms and Lai (2011:1266) who claimed lecturers had 'been slow' in taking full advantage of the available technology on offer for use in the classroom. This was a surprising finding in the focus university as an active technology section had consistently encouraged the wide use of technology.

Further reasoning for defensiveness on the use of a Dictaphone may have involved concerns about students quoting lecturers words in assessments. Confidentiality may also have been a reason for not permitting the use of Dictaphones. There was a concern here though that the empowerment over learning originally given to the student through the reasonable adjustment of

a Dictaphone, had shifted to the lecturer who believed they had the right to disempower the student by making a decision that may or may not have been in the student's best interest (Rioux 2014:134). Beauchamp-Pryor (2012a:286; Burke, Stevenson and Whelan 2015) remind of the powerful hegemonic discourses impacting upon lecturers' decisions and workload that involves 'overriding the powerless' in order to 'impede the inclusive process'. There appears to be much evidence of this within the study (4.2.2; 4.3.1; 4.3.4).

Ellie had also been refused access to her Dictaphone and went to talk to the Student Wellbeing service who told her:

> *Well there's nothing really we can do cos it's just that it's on the teacher's discretion as to whether they give it you and if they don't… then that's it (Ellie, stage 2/3 JHS, Dyslexia).*

Though the interventions and resources provided by the LSP were in principle an expression of inclusive practice, in reality they had been of limited value because the lecturers had refused access to them. Lersilp (2016) claimed disabled students had a legal right to access assistive technology. However according to Beauchamp-Pryor (2012a:286) students often experienced 'barriers to participation' that had not been addressed or had been denied. In this case the barriers involved the lecturers in the classroom.

Such responses from lecturers caused Jane and Ellie to experience some degree of anxiety. The use of a Dictaphone had been put in as a requirement on their LSP but had now been dismissed by their lecturers. The students found they needed to find alternative ways of managing their learning needs, which they did, however, they were disappointed the support they believed they had a right to had now been denied. This may have been because these students may not have had any rights at all; or that as suggested by Young and Quibell (2000:747) such rights might not have been 'strictly enforceable'. However, the use of a Dictaphone would have been classed as base level provision (HEFE 1999). Interestingly this could also be interpreted as lecturers having the right to 'enforce' exclusion and undermine the LSP and thus disregard the learning needs of disabled students.

Unfortunately, as Boyd (2014:379) suggested a deficit model of provision for disabled students ‘had driven educational practices for some time’ and tended to be ‘characteristically compensatory in nature’. Liasidou (2014:127) also reminded that ‘fostering inclusion in HE had entailed moving away from compensatory means of support’ towards an inclusive pedagogy in order that needs could be met in a none discriminating way. These difficulties experienced by students such as Jane and Ellie were not acceptable. The lecturers believed they had a right but that the students did not. What the lecturers appeared to have was the power to override the needs of disabled students as well overriding the learning support provision put into place as a minimum provision (HEFCE 1999) to support disabled students.

Linda and Alison who were discussed earlier really needed a note taker but were also forced to manage with equipment that was useless to them. The Dictaphones could not be seen as compensation and had in similar experiences to Jane and Ellie, made the situations more challenging for the students. According to Weedon (2012:52) the ‘barriers actually faced by [the students] were environmental and societal’ and such barriers may have left the students feeling helpless and worried about what they needed to do next (Barnes and Mercer 2010:33). This alluded to Seligman’s (2006) learned helplessness and the reasons for students to fail if they did not know how to put their own strategies in place. The students were feeling oppressed (Beauchamp-Pryor 2012a; Allan 2010a/b) disadvantaged by the environment that was supposed to remove such barriers and enable them ‘access’ to ‘information and activities in the same way as students without disabilities’ (Lersilp 2016:1).

Lunt and Norwich (2009) discussed the dilemma of ensuring effectiveness in the classroom which was a governmental expectation in the UK, and how such effectiveness was often placed in conflict with inclusiveness. This often happened in order to ensure teaching was considered effective and high ratings maintained. However, inclusion could often be overlooked. Allan (2010a:607) suggested that when there was ‘more focus on raising achievement’, and ‘forgetting or overlooking the ‘other’, that disabled people were then expected to cooperate or fend for themselves. This related to

Waterford *et al.* (2006) who informed of the inconsistency between policy and practice in terms of addressing disability across the sector and the 'disparities in provision and practice within and between institutions and disciplines' (Waterford *et al.* 2006:3). Lunt and Norwich (2009:97) suggested that what may be effective for some students, may not be effective for others and so 'conflicting views on the relationship between high attainment and the inclusion' of disabled students was observed. It is here that such conflicting views from students would be monitored in terms of student satisfaction in the National Student Survey (NSS) as part of the Teaching Excellence Framework (TEF) (see section 2.4).

Norwich (2007) explained how the dilemmas and tensions experienced in the classroom could involve positive and negative consequences for both the student and the lecturer and where hard decisions may have needed to be made. Norwich (2007) explained how a positive negotiation between lecturer and student involved recognition of individual needs and the requirement to ensure that both needs and rights were satisfied where possible. A negative negotiation according to Norwich (2007) could involve what appeared to be unfair treatment or may be interpreted by the student as being less valued. For this reason Norwich (2007) suggested both parties needed to negotiate a way forward in order to ensure the rights of the students and the lecturer were attended to. It may be that a third party was needed in order to mediate the process and ensure equity. This would present some challenges in terms of time and staffing but as Gargiulo and Metcalf (2012) suggested, there needed to be more co-construction and facilitation for learning between lecturers and students in order to enable changes to take place.

Lersilp (2016) suggested the use of assistive technology could enhance the learning potential for all students and provided more opportunities for extending learning and provided better learning experiences for all students. A useful addition to classrooms in the focus university was the Panopto system which enabled lecturers to record lectures and which could be uploaded onto the intranet for students to view. Whilst used by some

lecturers, the system was not used widely. The reason for this was possibly due to ethical concerns, such as the naming and discussion of schools and students' experiences within schools. Boyd (2014:383) lamented how technology could provide 'alternative routes to participation' and 'challenged otherness and difference in constructions of disability'. This was particularly relevant in terms of providing an inclusive environment, where disabled students were finding access to the course difficult because they were struggling to keep up with the pace of proceedings; and where lecturers were unaware of specific difficulties. Alnahdi (2014:18) suggested the use of technology in the classroom could enable students to overcome many of the challenges they experienced in the classroom and could act as the reasonable adjustment disabled students needed to support their access to the lecture content. Alnahdi (2014) also claimed that by ignoring the existence of technology, lecturers could be denying disabled (and none disabled students) the opportunity to maximise their performance in the classroom and increase their confidence while undertaking tasks.

Another interpretation of how these lecturers responded towards assistive technology could be connected to the 'elitist' attitude that Madriaga *et al.* (2011) found towards disabled students. They suggested some lecturers considered disabled students to be less capable intellectually than students without a disability and less able to perform well in HE. This also related to Tinklin *et al's* (2004:2) research which found lecturers believed 'adjustments to teaching practices would lower standards and give unfair advantage to disabled students'. This attitude was reflected in the HEFCE (1999:section 22) which informed of the ignorance found amongst staff on the 'capacities of [disabled] students' suggesting the 'indifference and… complacency… tended to come from [lecturers'] previous 'experiences of supporting individual students. Although there had been some progress, HEFCE (1999) suggested there was 'still discrimination to be tackled'. This was upheld in the HEFCE (2009) and HEFCE (2017) which suggested there was still some convincing of lecturers in terms of accepting disabled students still to be undertaken.

In reality, using assistive technology in the classroom was thought to provide a better learning environment where all students could benefit (Alnahdi

2014). It was evident some lecturers were not prepared to change their style of teaching and so were likely to disadvantage disabled students (Pumfrey 2008). Inclusive policy according to Beauchamp-Pryor (2012b:58), had clearly indicated lecturers should have regard for disabled students as part of their duties. However, Riddell and Weedon (2014) claimed there still remained some degree of reluctance to acknowledge disability as well as some resistance to make the necessary reasonable adjustments as outlined in the Equality Act (2010) which in this case involved assistive technology. The attitude of lecturers here again could be related to the audit culture discussed by Allan (2010a and Cruickshank 2016:2) that involved lecturers in delivering 'excellence in terms of teaching and research outputs' and yet lecturers may have been prioritising research outputs over teaching roles.

This section has found Dictaphones were often unhelpful and their use in the classroom had been rejected by two of students' lecturers. In addition to this, although a range of assistive technology was available, some lecturers chose not to use it although it would have enabled more effective learning for all students.

4.2.6 Difficulties in using the software provided,

The data demonstrated the majority of students were provided with a range of software to support their learning. Such software was found mostly amongst students with dyslexia. The software provided included 'Dragon *Speak',* an application which allowed students to speak into a device that transferred the student's voice into text. *Fragmo Read* was also mentioned which enlarged text. Mind mapping software was also being used as well as software to support reading and writing. Whilst Mike (stage 2 EDS) found the software helpful:

> *I have a [Dictaphone]… and I have the 'Dragon Speak' and all that sort of stuff... and that's kind of helpful… so I've got all that stuff if I need it which is good… (Mike, stage 2 EDS Dyslexia).*

Some students found the software provided was difficult to use, and the training on how to use the software unhelpful:

> *I got assisted technology which is great apart from the fact that the people that supplied it do the training, and they are not dyslexic friendly… They train in six hour blocks which my brain can't cope with… I went back to them (Student Wellbeing services) and I said look, I want extra training with the Dyslexia Association because they are training in the way that I need… I am six weeks away from finishing my degree, still not had the training… I've been back to them and they simply won't have it and they are the ones who are supposed to enable the disabled. (Linda, stage 3 JHS Visual impairment/dyslexia).*

Linda's experience suggested the system for training students to use the Dragon software was not meeting her needs. The training in its current state had taken too long and found to be confusing. According to Linda, the training was undertaken with an IT specialist who appeared to have limited understanding of dyslexia. Linda suggested the IT specialist talked at her *'for a number of hours'* when what she needed was information broken down into manageable chunks with practice to use the software. This experience informed the interpretation that the type of training used could be considered to be tokenistic in its approach. The training described showed some attempt to meet regulations, but did so without any real commitment to supporting the students' individual needs. Skelton's (2005:4) suggested some educators believed 'teaching [to be] a simple practical activity' used to 'deliver predetermined outcomes'.

This style of teaching would be viewed as a tokenistic,' tick box exercise' to 'deliver information as quickly as possible' (see also 4.2.3) and to ensure the control and dominance of the neo-liberalist philosophy was being achieved (Radice 2013:408) through 'values, structures and processes'. HEFCE (2017) reminds here that the compliance to the Equality Act (2010) could 'not be achieved by following a simple checklist'. However, this passive, tick box teaching approach had not served its purpose and had left Linda feeling confused and unable to use the software.

It should be noted here that there would have been funding issues connected

to obtaining sufficient training; particularly in terms of the changes taking place with the DSA (Havergal 2015). According to Linda, who had explored a range of training options, suggested that the training from the Dyslexia Association was the type of training she needed. Unfortunately, the Student Wellbeing Service could not offer this training because *'the Dyslexia Association charged more per hour'*. This meant the students with dyslexia were expected to manage with the training provided or fund further training themselves. Interestingly the following two students had similar experiences with the training provided for their use of software and equipment:

> *The guy that brought all of my stuff round, he gave me a little tutorial on how to use this stuff and he said he will be in contact with me to kind of refresh and to keep working on it like a training system. But they never contacted, never came back to me. I've used it a few times… I've not really got into it that much. Because… I'm not too sure about it. I probably should have followed it up a bit more but… you get mixed up with all this and that… you just want to get on with your studies don't you? Instead of trying to faff around and try and make all this stuff work for you… it's quite difficult. But I have tried to use it and it does work sometimes… (Mike, stage 2 EDS dyslexia).*

> *'The guy came around, basically spewed information at me for hours… then left, I never used it'* (Susan, stage 3 EDS dyslexia).

The following students also struggled with the software provided:

> *I've got Read and Write as well, I don't really use any of them… which I probably should but I don't... The dragon, you talk to it and it comes out and says something completely different to what you have said…. [I think you have to train it don't you to your voice?] yes, I haven't got the time and haven't got the patience. I used to just get angry with it, I just thought why am I'm wasting my time on this? I could be sitting down doing my assignment so I won't use it. Which I know… that's naughty and I should… I mean if it did, I would use it... because it would be so much easier for me but I just can't get on with it, so I'm just like… no… (Ellie, stage 2/3 JHS dyslexia)*

> *You have to speak slowly [into microphone], and think with your mind, you know, your thought processes… its quite… fast and you need to get… [laughs] my memory is like a sieve, so if I don't write it down I won't remember. So I think that wasn't really useful for me. But… I got this mind map thing… I tried it out last semester with… my two essays that was kind of helpful… (Ann, stage 3 EDS dyslexia).*

An interesting point from Ellie suggested she thought she had been ‘naughty’ because she had not used the software she was struggling to use. Such thinking could relate to issues of self-esteem that she was naughty because she did not understand and had not tried to overcome her dyslexia (Houghton 2005). This is out of the scope of this study, but would be an interesting area to explore in terms of self-esteem and self-efficacy in the future. The findings around the allocation of software suggested students often did not have time or indeed the inclination to try to understand the different types of software provided to support them. Often their disability, which for the majority tended to be dyslexia, caused the students to feel confused and then when the training did not match their learning needs, this added to their confusion. This demonstrated yet again the robotic and tokenistic attempt that did not comply with the Equality Act (2010) and did not help to manage students’ individual needs (Skelton 2005).

Out of the eight students with dyslexia who had been provided with software, only two students, including Carl, appeared to be using the software, seemingly because they had been willing to spend time accommodating the software into their studies:

> *I got a recorder, er Fragmo Read, Dragon, Fragmo read is brilliant… I need it because of reading, I can’t read unless its large, so I’m using that now at work as well as with my uni studies… so that’s really helped me, dragon I think is one of those things you’ve got to pursue... you’ve got to practice. (Carl, stage 2 JHS dyslexia)*

Interestingly, the government report from DBIS (2014:66) suggested assistive technology was likely to be the only support for students with a ‘mild’ disability in the near future, unless the students’ diagnostic tests proved otherwise. It has been evident that the software provided did not appear to be suitable in most situations and the training was largely found to be tokenistic and not compliant with the Equality Act 2010 (HEFCE 2017) in meeting students’ needs.

Moving on from the discussion around software and Dictaphones which were

often limited or of no use to the disabled students, there were other resources provided for students to support their disability. The next resource for discussion was a labelled chair for a student with a spinal injury.

4.2.7 Using a labelled chair

An interesting issue arose from Bev's experience of living with a spinal injury. Part of the provision for Bev was an ergonomic chair placed in the classrooms where Bev was studying:

> *I was told that I would have a specific chair... like the computer chairs… with a back support to be put in every classroom but that seems to have disappeared, but, saying that… it sort of made me feel a bit isolated, because there was a big, big thing on it with a 'for the disabled' on it… and so everybody was going… who is going to be sitting in that seat? So I didn't want to use it anyway…. (Bev, stage 2 JHS spinal injury)*

Bev discussed how embarrassed she felt as she observed fellow students looking around to see who would use the chair:

> *'Having the sign on it was a bit of a nightmare because then people do judge you and it was like... well… what's up with her, she looks alright'… (Bev, stage 2 JHS spinal injury).*

Bev had felt her peers were looking at her and weighing up her issues:

> *You know, with a back problem people can't see… and if you smile at them they don't understand what the problem is anyway, so I didn't use it [the chair] anyway (Bev, stage 2 JHS spinal injury).*

It was clear Bev needed a reasonable adjustment to be made and provision had been put into place for her. The difficulty for Bev appeared to be when she found the chair was labelled 'for the disabled' (Fuller 2008). Unfortunately, Bev felt too embarrassed to use the chair because of the potential stigma attached to her disability (Barnes and Mercer 2010) and the complexities alongside the concerns on how she would be viewed by her peers (Appelqvist-Schmidlechner *et al.* 2016). The question could be asked here as to whether the provision of the chair was a reasonable adjustment,

an unreasonable adjustment or even an embarrassing adjustment. The chair provided to support Bev, had presented an awkward dilemma and fearful feelings of exposure. Bev had experienced some bullying in a previous organisation and felt worried that such could reoccur if she exposed herself again by using the chair. Bev's experience demonstrated how complex and subjective inclusion could be and linked back to the differing ways that inclusion was viewed by others (Avramidis *et al.* 2002).

Bev's experience demonstrated a reasonable adjustment that had become unreasonable as it had exposed her to the stares and curiosity of other students and she was adamant she was not going to experience such exposure again:

> I won't use it… and now that I can use a lift to every floor…I can cope with a large chair for a lecture *(Bev, stage 2 JHS spinal injury)*.

In this situation, the findings informed how the medical model had again been satisfied with a diagnosis and recognition of Bev's characteristic difficulties (Slee 2008). There was evidence of how the social model had been used to provide a reasonable adjustment in the form of a specialised chair. Bev was adamant she did not want to be 'labelled as disabled' (Fuller 2008:3) alongside the chair which as mentioned above, disappeared after a while and so was not available after all. It is understandable the funding for disabled students was likely to be reduced after reports suggested equipment was not being used. I would argue the student's needs had not been fully understood (Hodkinson and Vickerman 2009) and more time needed to be taken in order to ascertain fully what Bev needed to support her further in her learning. Myers and Newman (2014:11) referred to this as 'understanding the students themselves' and is what Shakespeare (2004) was alluding to in his discussion on the social model of embodiment. Shakespeare (2004) believed it was necessary to take an individual's needs more seriously and show 'greater understanding and awareness of the 'lived experiences' of disabled students' (Gibson 2012:253). This has clearly not been recognised fully in Bev's situation.

4.2.8 Student perceptions and experiences with support workers

In contrast to digital or physical resources provided as a reasonable adjustment, the majority of students agreed they had been provided with a support worker and that the support worker was mostly helpful to them:

> *She can help me get started and she is invaluable with that, she helps get my thoughts in order because one of my problems with dyslexia is short term memory… it's the cognitive processing and I just need time.. the time it takes me to actually process… so she helps me to get things into order and she proofreads… and she is fab. (Linda, stage 3 JHS, Visual impairment/dyslexia)*

The students explained the process involved in gaining support from a support worker by suggesting that after undertaking their SNA they received a list of support workers whom they were expected to contact themselves. The student had to make the initial contact with the support worker and find out whether the worker would accept them onto their caseload:

> *'They give you a list of people you can choose to approach and you decide' (Linda, stage 3 JHS, visual impairment/dyslexia).*

The list of support workers presented to the students provided them with the background of each support worker and included the support worker's subject knowledge and specialism in terms of the disabilities they supported. Linda was very satisfied with her support worker:

> *Well I have got a support dyslexia tutor which I really like, he's really great… I had a previous tutor in my last two years… but this guy is so good… I think I really like the difference and I like being independent, and I like having the opportunity to be independent… which I don't think I had previously. And it helps to keep you motivated if you have somebody to work with. (Linda, stage 3 JHS, visual impairment / dyslexia)*

Simone (stage 1 EDS, dyslexia), on the other hand had a different experience in gaining a support worker:

> *I was given like a tutor list and I was able to pick one… like they write a paragraph about themselves and then you choose from that paragraph… who you want, so I emailed one… I literally only got through a week ago, took ages… she's like a dyslexia tutor or something and it was like, "oh I'm really busy and I'm not really sure whether I really want to meet you" , so I thought, well my deadlines are in 2 weeks, I was like… can I at least email you work or questions or do I need to go to someone else?… so I didn't know whether she wanted me to… so it was a bit confusing…* (Simone, stage 1 EDS, dyslexia)

Simone was in the first stage one of her degree and very new to the process of gaining support in HE. The interpretation of Simone's concerns suggested Simone had found the system unresponsive to her needs which were starting to cause her to feel panic as the deadlines for her assignments were getting closer.

According to a senior member of staff from the Student Wellbeing service a support worker was put into place to scaffold the student until the student was more able to manage their learning independently. This support was provided so that disabled students received more support in the early stages of their degree and this was then tapered off as the student moved through their degree. By the time the students reached their third year it was thought students would be less likely to need support from support workers. This relates to the increased development of independence expected in students due to the dominant discourse of Neo-liberalism in HE and which is considered to be part of their preparation to take their place in an adaptable workforce (Beauchamp-Pryor 2012a) which is one of the main goals of HE (Radice 2013; Saunders 2007).

Susan thought her support would be constant all the way through her degree. Unfortunately during stage three Susan related how her support hours had been reduced drastically:

> *They gave me so many support hours with a tutor… however… it was increased in my second year when I was pregnant. This is… the third year, I have to say I am disgusted that the university do this… they actually drop your support hours in the third year. I've fought them and I've actually got the same support hours this year as I did last year… They believe that as you progress through your studies your support should lessen and my dyslexia tutor said to them… "well her support needs to be increased because she was pregnant and fatigues and whatever… but she's still dyslexic…" Dyslexia doesn't improve… I still need help to read journals and things like that… but the university don't do that with everyone else, it's only because I fought for it that I've got my hours increased, but it should be standard for everybody (Susan, stage 3 EDS dyslexia).*

Susan was suggesting that her dyslexia was not going to improve and that she still needed the same levels of support. This dilemma was put to the Student Wellbeing professional who informed that students received one to one support from their first year, and that this could be for around two hours a week. Moreover, as students with LSPs progressed into their final year, it would be expected that they would have developed strategies for themselves in order that the one to one time with a support worker could lessen. Thus allowing the student to become more autonomous and independent (Lau 2015; Fry *et al.* 2003). This was certainly the case for Linda (stage 3 JHS Visual impairment/dyslexia) who had found the support given by her support worker had empowered her 'secure sense of personal identity' (Light and Cox 2001:186). For Susan, however, this had not been the case and she believed she needed her support to be maintained as it had been from the start of her course.

This raised questions about the difference in the students' individual experiences and their needs; as well as how their opinions were linked to the type of support they received. The additional and continuing support that Susan had to fight for may have been seen as burdensome (Yates 2015) to her providers within a neo-liberalist context because she did not fit the typical model of the university student who working towards potential entrepreneurship and able to 'market themselves' (Saunders 2007:2; Radice 2013). It should be noted that Susan, although severely dyslexic was already in the process of setting up her own company to support children with dyslexia.

Another area of concern involved support workers. The findings suggested that some students who had undertaken the SNA had been told they would have a support worker, but they did not know who they needed to contact. Alison (stage 3 EDS dyspraxia) suggested she *'wouldn't know who to email'* now that she had had her SNA. Jane (stage 3 JHS, Epilepsy) on the other hand commented that if she had had a support worker they probably would not know enough about her disability. Jane felt that it would not have been helpful to her to have a support worker. On the other hand, she was concerned because she did not *''know who to go to now…'.*

It appeared both Alison and Jane were confused as to what they needed to do next in terms of accessing a support worker. I thought it was strange that the students had not made any real effort to go and find out what they needed to do. It was difficult as a researcher to remain objective within this study as I wanted to advise the students to go and get some help, however, I had to be aware of the ethical implications of doing so. There were occasions such as this though, I suggested the students needed to go back to the Student Wellbeing Service reception and ask to talk to a member of the support team to talk about their SNA provision. This advice was backed up by the Student Wellbeing professional who informed that students were encouraged to talk to the support staff if they had issues or questions. The question could be asked here though, as to why these students had demonstrated such passivity towards gaining support. It was possible that they were worried or anxious about approaching staff for support and probably believed they had to remain passive and powerless (Richards and Armstrong 2008:21). The passivity or anxiousness could have, according to Reivich *et al.* (2012:201) ruminated from previous experiences which they did not want to experience again.

The knowledge that some disabled students were not accessing their support worker was a concern. This may have been connected to the competence of the support worker and how well the support worker had helped the student to develop skills of self-reliance rather than dependency. It may be that the students had not listened or understood the information during the SNA. The

students may have misinterpreted their LSP and not returned to the Student Wellbeing Service as instructed to discuss their needs further. It may also be possible that the Student Wellbeing professional had not communicated the provision clearly enough or that a tick box exercise had been used (Skelton 2005) to ensure minimum provision (HEFCE 1999) was in place for the student. This is where the 'multiple interpretations' around understanding support and inclusive practice suggested by Guest *et al.* (2013:6) could become 'complex and contentious'. The information from the SNA provided may not have been encoded correctly by the student and so retrieval could have been problematic

This section suggested a clearer process of communicating with support workers was needed with clear guidelines on the process to accessing a support worker. This would help to ensure disabled students could understand their role in gaining access to support and were not left feeling disadvantaged and confused.
The next section considers disabled students lived experiences when they approached lecturers to discuss their support plan and the difficulties often experienced in the classroom in terms of asymmetries of power between the lecturer and the student (Pantazidou and Gaventa 2016).

4.3 Section three – The lived experiences of disabled students in HE classrooms.

4.3.1 Approaching the lecturer with a Learning Support Plan (LSP)

Tinklin, Riddell and Wilson (2004) informed of the difficulties some disabled students experienced when approaching lecturers to discuss learning needs. They suggested the reasoning behind such difficulties could be that students were experiencing anxiety and a fear of exposure or even failure in class. The following table shows a comparison of student responses upon approaching lecturers to discuss their LSP.

Approaching lecturers with a Learning Support Plan

Unhelpful responses from lecturers	Supportive responses from lecturers
I've not approached a lecturer face to face	Some lecturers are fantastic, they print scripts on blue paper!
I didn't feel confident to go and see them	She said, Tell me what you need, I'll make sure it is there for you
They've not been interested	They've been so supportive
They wouldn't help	I felt relaxed knowing that they knew
I think some lecturers are more terrifying than others	I've spoken to a few lecturers
I should be able to go up and say... I have this problem	They (support services) told me to say… 'I've got a support plan'
You do feel strange… you feel embarrassed	I let my lecturer know to advise them of my support plan
You feel like a right pain to the lecturers	They seemed more human than the others I went to.

Table seven - Approaching lecturers with an LSP

Tinklin, Riddell and Wilson (2004) suggested it was normal for students to feel uncertain or fearful initially when approaching a lecturer in a new situation. The comments from disabled students in table seven suggested their lecturer had ignored them (Beauchamp-Pryor 2012a) or discouraged them from approaching their lecturers. Madriaga *et al.* (2011) suggested some lecturers appeared to be less tolerant of disabled students and viewed such students as being less capable to manage the work set in class. On the other hand, the fear experienced by some students about approaching lecturers was a concern that needed to be addressed. It was possible that some lecturers had not viewed the managing of disabled students' learning as part of their role (Pumfrey 2008). In connection to this, Lau (2015) informed the mission of universities in the 21st century had been to nurture students towards becoming lifelong autonomous and independent learners. This meant, according to Wilkins and Burke (2015) that students would be prepared to become part of the skilled, qualified, flexible, and adaptable workforce in the UK economy. For this reason most lecturers tended to encourage independent learning in order to foster such autonomy (Lau 2015; Fry *et al.* 2003). This should not mean though that lecturers were not

approachable. Indeed Fry *et al.* (2003) suggested lecturers were often considered to be facilitators of learning who encouraged students to take responsibility for their own learning but whom were available to support students as needed. According to the focus university's LSP information, students were instructed by the Student Wellbeing Service to make contact with their lecturers:

> *[I was told to] always make yourself known to the [lecturer]… you know what I mean? So you understand… just make yourself known, but a lot of them [lecturers] will say that they haven't had it (LSP) or aren't aware... so sometimes I actually forwarded it to them… electronically… (Carl, stage 2 JHS dyslexia).*

An interpretation of this suggested some lecturers may have overlooked or ignored the LSP (Beauchamp-Pryor (2012a). This omission may have been linked to workload and the audit culture (2.4), but may also have been linked to the elitist attitude that caused some lecturers to view disabled students as underachieving and incapable of meeting the learning outcomes of the course. Madriaga (2011) suggested such an attitude would have a negative impact on inclusivity in the classroom; whereby disabled students were considered to be burdensome (Yates 2015). Such attitudes exclude students from the social justice they have rights to (Gibson 2015; Young and Quibell 2000) and Liasidou (2014) claimed elitism would provide only a limited space to support disabled students. If the lecturer was not aware there was an LSP in place the impact upon the student could be similar to Nyanda's experience (stage 2 EDS dyslexia/dyspraxia):

> *I was asked once [*by a lecturer] *have you got dyslexia? And I was like yeah of course, you would know that already...* [I thought] *you should read your computer and I was like alright lady... somewhere along the line the lecturer hasn't… picked it up at all… which is something I…. would have expected everyone to have known without me having to have to speak to them…. it's not like it's embarrassing but it's just like the awkward moment of saying I've got this and I've got that. (Nyanda, stage 2 EDS dyslexia/dyspraxia).*

Linda (stage 3 JHS Visual impairment) also related an experience with a lecturer that had, according to Linda, led to a formal complaint. Linda had

informed her lecturer she had a visual impairment and dyslexia and wanted to be able to download some reading material to her kindle:

> *His response was huh, what do you want to do that for? And I was in a class of 40 odd people. I said well actually I'm dyslexic and if I can put it on my kindle I can change the font size… I can change the background… [I also] sent him an email and he ignored it, didn't even acknowledge it, although at the end of the lesson he came up to me and said… this thing you've got, can you even read? (*Linda, stage 3 JHS visual impairment/dyslexia).

The student account revealed how the lecturer appeared to have limited understanding of Linda's disability and had not realised the needs of his student. An interpretation of Linda's experience suggested there may have been some confrontation between the student and the lecturer. This related to Martin's (2006:3) research as the lecturer may have been expressing 'feelings of inadequacy' in the way they responded to Linda's situation. Ineland (2015) claimed inclusive education presented opportunities for the lecturer to demonstrate increased professional cooperation in supporting disabled students which could help to improve the quality of learning. On the other hand, it could be seen here that there were threats (or difficulties) to managing the quality of learning. Such a confrontation also related to the professional ambiguity in relation to the roles and responsibilities of the lecturer (Radice 2013) and how the lecturer understood, interpreted or implemented inclusive education (Ineland 2015). In this case it appeared the lecturer probably did not see supporting Linda as part of his role, possibly because he was not familiar with Linda's disability. He may also have viewed Linda and her disability as being burdensome within the classroom (Yates 2015). However, such feelings of inadequacy (Martin 2006) may have caused the lecturer to become more authoritative in defending his opinion and role as an educator.

Asymmetries of power were evident here as the power relationship between the lecturer and student was 'played' out (Pantazidou and Gaventa 2016). On the one hand, Linda was trying to control her situation to avoid feelings of powerless (Beauchamp-Pryor 2012b; Albert 2004). However, on the other hand there was retaliation from the lecturer whose actions could be

interpreted as trying to maintain an authority and power base as the expert in the classroom (Gosling 2007; Cranton 2006); rather than attempting to use his power to support Linda with the changes she needed (Allan 2010a). Linda's experience also suggested the lecturer was making assumptions about her disability which according to Bowls (2003) demonstrated the tendency for lecturers to problematise students rather than seeing the problem as being with themselves as a lecturer. This meant the lecturer had not seen it as their duty to be inclusive, nor did they appear to be willing to make reasonable adjustments for a student with an LSP. Sidelinger *et al*. (2012:292 and Pantazidou and Gaventa 2016) suggested a 'power difference' or an asymmetry of power could occur when an individual, such as a student, was in the subordinate role and attempted to exert influence 'over those in the superior role'. They suggested the student and their lecturer may have been threatening 'the face' of each other. Which meant there could be an 'increased chance that a reciprocal or subjective face threat' had occurred.

This confrontation appeared to be heading in a different direction to the social model thinking which according to Barer (2007), was supposed to encourage more cooperative problem-solving and a focus on making and changing attitudes. In Linda's situation there appeared to be limited recognition of the disability or her rights (Young and Quibell 2000; Gibson 2015) by her lecturer which had caused her to feel 'abnormal' (Albert 2004) and embarrassed by her lecturer's response. The response in terms of whether the student could read or not was particularly embarrassing to Linda. The medical model thinking being posed here involved the expectation that Linda would need to adapt herself to the environment rather than the environment making any reasonable adjustments to support her needs (Houghton 2005). Again, if Shakespeare's (2004) suggestion to consider individual needs had been taken into account, the lecturer would have been more mindful of Linda's needs and demonstrated more understanding of the difficulties being experienced, rather than demonstrating a patronising attitude in order to put her in her place in front of her peers (Barnes and Mercer 2010:33).

Another example of a student approaching a lecturer to disclose a disability involved Ellie (stage 2/3 JHS dyslexia):

> *When I went to see one of my lecturers and said, oh just to let you know I'm dyslexic and I have a little girl, and she looked at me and she said you have made that very hard on yourself coming to uni, and I just sort of looked at her and thought, I'm sure you shouldn't be saying things like that to me.* (Ellie, stage 2/3 JHS dyslexia).

This lecturer may have been familiar with inclusive practice, however, Ellie had perceived, in my interpretation of the situation, that the lecturer was failing her before she had even started. It was almost as if the lecturer had viewed Ellie as a disabled person with a child who would not succeed at university. There was evidence of a potentially elitist attitude again (Beauchamp-Pryor 2012b:263) that suggested 'HE was for the rich and able' that excluded disabled people from the social justice they had a right to. The word 'burdensome' used by Yates (2015) comes to mind again here as managing Ellie's needs would have meant additional engagement with her lecturer. It would appear Ellie was looking for more support than was offered and when that did not come in the way she had hoped, Ellie perceived the message from her lecturer to be patronising and unhelpful. An explanation here maybe that the lecturer had observed other students in a similar position and was demonstrating that she cared and was concerned about the amount of work the student was taking upon herself. On the other hand the lecturer may have been thinking about the amount of work they (the lecturer) would have had to put in to supporting Ellie further. This would involve the lecturer in delivering 'excellence in terms of teaching and research outputs' (Cruickshank 2016:2 Allan 2010a) whilst supporting disabled students. Ellie continued to reminisce about a time when she had asked another lecturer for help around a concept she had not understood:

> *The tutor was just not very helpful, I went to him because I didn't understand it, he said "what don't you understand?" I said, "well, all of it" He said, "you need to come to me with a precise thing, I need to know what you don't understand" and I was like, but none of it. He said "if you don't understand it maybe you should go part time", and I was like… right ok… I didn't feel confident to go and see them in tutorials… (Ellie, stage 2/3 JHS dyslexia)*

An interpretation of the above situation would suggest Ellie had approached her lecturer with limited thought about what her real issue was and expected the lecturer to save her from herself by filling in all the gaps of her misunderstanding. Ellie clearly needed to think through some of the concepts independently and make an appointment to discuss the gaps in her thinking. On the other hand the lecturer's response to a disabled student could be interpreted as an abuse of power (Gosling 2007).Whilst the lecturer was entitled to their point of view, they had subsequently dominated the student and thus created a limitation in power in terms of the disabled student's voice (Beauchamp-Pryor:2012b:262). There appeared to be limited understanding of roles for both student and lecturer here. Ellie had exposed her vulnerability to her lecturer; however, the onus of her misunderstanding had been placed back on to herself. This evidence demonstrated the difficulties experienced by students who needed to be developed in resilience and an understanding of independent learning. On the other hand, the lecturer also needed guidance on how to make reasonable adjustments and listen to the student voice.

4.3.2 The teacher centred approach to learning and teaching

The situation between Ellie and her lecturer above could also be explained by the domination of a teacher centred approach. Gibbs and Tang (2011) suggested this approach was linked to a deficit set of discourses and conceptualisations which involved the lecturer as the 'knowledgeable, expert' or the 'sage on the stage'. This meant the lecturer 'expounded the information' and expected students to absorb and report back 'accurately' (Gibbs and Tang 2011:18; Shipton 2014). Gibbs and Tang (2011:18) suggested teacher centred teaching often involved a 'blame the student' culture' which meant if the students did not learn, it was connected to student ability and motivation rather than there being something wrong with the teaching.

The majority of students in the study reported similar experiences to Ellie, suggesting a teacher centred approach was a common phenomenon and a demonstration of the asymmetries of power found throughout the data

(Richards and Armstrong 2008; Hagenauer. and Volet 2016; Pantazidou and Gaventa 2016; Sidelinger *et al* 2012). Most students suggested they struggled to approach their lecturers. In some cases this would appear to be due to the lecturer's curt response and the limited understanding shown towards the student and their disability. The tone of voice used by a lecturer may have been well meaning, however, the lecturers' voices could also appear intimidating, and at times frightening to students trying to disclose something that may potentially expose them to stigma and labelling. Ann's experience of approaching her lecturers suggested she was afraid to disclose her disability to them:

> *'But I wouldn't know what to say, like hi, I have dyslexia, and then think… ok... I'll go now… I think some [lecturers] actually are a little bit more terrifying than others… in the first year, a few lecturers terrified me… (Ann, stage 3 EDS dyslexia).*

This relates again to the power struggles experienced by students and the expectations, from the lecturer to remain 'passive' and 'powerless' (Richards and Armstrong (2008:21).

These findings have provided a rich account of asymmetries in power and reasons why some students may have chosen not to disclose their disability (see section 2.8). This section has found the majority of students were fearful of approaching lecturers and were worried they may not be included in class because they had a disability.

4.3.3 Student fears of being labelled as disabled

The fear of being labelled as disabled by lecturers was well evidenced in the data:

> *'It affects me a bit and I don't want to be labelled'(Ann, stage 3 EDS dyslexia).*

Such fear was justified as the previous student examples demonstrated. This also related to what Fuller (2008:3) explained in terms of students not feeling comfortable to be 'labelled as disabled', or students might experience feelings of fear at the thought of exposure, stigma, labelling or discrimination

(Fry, Ketteridge and Marshall 2003; Beauchamp-Pryor (2012a). Allan (2003) thought that this type of feeling was unusual because diagnostic labels had been originally viewed as educationally helpful. Matthews (2009:232) suggested that labels were used widely 'because of the resources they released'. On the other hand Nyanda commented that she did not really want to discuss her disability with her lecturers:

> *It's kind of weird having to go and talk to them [lecturers] because Student Wellbeing is supposed to cover that aspect and… going to see them [the lecturer] and saying 'oh I've got dyslexia, is more like having that tag on you already (*Nyanda, stage 2 EDS dyslexia/dyspraxia).

An interpretation of Nyanda's concern involved some anxiety about approaching lecturers. According to Nyanda it was good enough she had disclosed her disability to the Student Wellbeing Service; the 'organisation [knew]' about her disability (DRC 2007). Nyanda's thinking suggested the organisation would have informed the lecturer and anyone else who needed to know about her disability; and put into place whatever reasonable adjustments were needed. Nyanda's opinion on disclosure also related to Santuzzi's (2013) discussion on the decision as to whether to disclose a disability. As far as Nyanda was concerned, she had disclosed her disability. She believed there was nothing more for her to do. This was a misunderstanding on behalf of the student as the LSP advised students to talk with their lecturers in order to fine tune the reasonable adjustment as needed. This attitude of limited agency and passivity (Richards and Armstrong 2008; Reivich *et al.* 2012) or the waiting for somebody else to sort out their learning needs seemed to have come up quite frequently in the findings (Other examples - Linda, Jane and Ellie). Interestingly, one of the reasons for not approaching lecturers, according to Fry *et al*. (2003:179) may be that disclosure could provoke 'belittling attitudes from other students or staff'. Matthews (2009:232) suggested that students might 'make strategic decisions about disclosure based on their previous experiences'. This suggests students may be aware of the power of labelling and the stigmatisation that could accompany it (See Mike's experience in section 4.2.2) For this reason it was understandable that some students may have

decided to keep a low profile and not disclose their disability at all. Such attitudes were evidenced throughout these findings and it would appear the data and literature had exposed a reality here. Although the equality legislation was clear in terms of reasonable adjustments, students such as Ann, Linda, Ellie and Jane were clearly not receiving an inclusive learning experience and often did not feel confident enough to challenge the system.

Linda (stage 3 JHS visual impairment/dyslexia).shared one positive response to disclosing her disability to one of her lecturers:

> *You do feel very strange, you feel very embarrassed and I know you shouldn't feel either. It's very embarrassing to keep saying it to people… could I just have those florescent lights switched off? Then it's "no"… and the thing is… you feel like a right pain to the lecturers, you know by just asking for the lights to be switched off every week… and I am totally fine if someone says that they need more light… and I think, well fine then I will sit somewhere… where I can… but you need somebody to play the game with you… and the lecturer in [subject named] every week promptly turns the lights out because it interferes with my brain (Linda, stage 3 JHS visual impairment/dyslexia).*

Linda's experience here demonstrated that a lecturer had listened to her and remembered her needs as a student with a visual impairment. An interesting phrase used by Linda in above statement was that she needed 'somebody to play the game' with her. This suggested Linda was willing to negotiate as advocated by Norwich (2007) and work in partnership with the lecturer in order to take responsibility for her disability and find a way to manage a reasonable adjustment. The lecturer in response had promptly turned the lights out in the classroom on Linda's arrival.

It was evident that such an adjustment had supported Linda, however, whilst the darkened room may have been effective for Linda, it 'may not [have been] effective for other' students (Lunt and Norwich (2009:97). Le Roux and Graham (1998; Florian and Linklater 2010; Florian and Black-Hawkins 2011), all considered the importance of ensuring inclusive practice reached all students and not just those students with a disability. Florian and Linklater (2010:370) particularly emphasised the importance of ensuring inclusive practice that responded to all students rather than 'specifically individualizing

for some'. They suggested an environment should be made available so that all students were able to participate in classroom life.

In Linda's situation, inviting her to sit in an area of the room that was more shaded or encouraging her to use the coloured glasses adapted to support her visual impairment, might have been a reasonable adjustment. This would have also ensured students who appreciated a well-lit room were also provided for. These findings have evidenced a need for more sensitivity around students who disclose their disability. It would also appear there needed to be more thought around the wider group when making reasonable adjustments to ensure all students could access the classroom resources as demonstrated by the case of Linda.

4.3.4 Approaching lecturers regarding assessments and tutorials

The findings suggested that some of the participants had concerns about approaching lecturers on the assessment of their work. This included tutorials prior to assessment and feedback given on the actual assessment. One situation involved Bev who had approached her lecturer with the intention of catching up on some information she had lost over the two weeks she had attended hospital appointments:

> *I went to see him on a couple of occasions… for tutorial help and help with my final essay and all I got was "you are working at level 5 now" and I said.. "yeah I know that but I just need a bit of guidance, and I got "well I'm not going to do your assignment for you".. and I thought.. well I know that… I'm not asking you to… (Bev, stage 2, EDS, spinal injury).*

Bev had been experiencing back pain and felt defensive at the tone of the lecturer's voice. The data suggested the lecturer thought Bev was trying to get him to do her assignment for her. Bev was happy to get on with her assignment; however, her experience of trying to receive guidance from her lecturer was disappointing to her. My interpretation of the lecturer's response was that this had possibly caused Bev to feel dishonest, although she knew she was only trying to gain some information on the sessions she had missed.

Another example from Linda showed how she had struggled to understand what the assessment involved in one of her modules. The lecturer had informed the class they would not be covering the assessment until week six, which was half way through the module. Linda had started to panic because she believed she needed to know about the assessment earlier in the module.

> *When you are dyslexic… then you get the questions in six weeks' time… that is of absolute no use to me whatsoever. I want it up front. I want to know what you expect from me so that I can then pin relevance from every lecture to my disability, otherwise it is a real disadvantage… I need to know after each lecture, to be able to pin back what you are trying to get me to do in the end… and I think if I had had that in the beginning, I don't think I would have struggled as much as I did. I'm just asking, just give me the cards at the beginning of the game… (Linda, stage 3 JHS visual impairment/dyslexia).*

For Linda, the experience of leaving the planning of an essay until later in the module had brought about undue pressure. Linda suggested she was juggling three essays at the same time, which she believed was too overwhelming. These experiences for disabled students preparing for assessments relate well to the discussion from Light and Cox (2001:169) who explained assessments could be 'the most emotionally sensitive part of our education'. Light and Cox (2001) suggested that although the assessment could be 'intellectually demanding', it may also be 'socially disturbing and divisive for students'. For a student with dyslexia this was likely to mean extra time was needed. In the focus university the majority of disabled students were offered extra time after the set deadline to hand in their assigned work, although this varied depending on the severity of the disability. The student account suggested Linda would have preferred to have known about the forthcoming assessment from the first session so that she was in possession of the '*cards at the beginning of the game'*. Such terminology suggested Linda felt cheated out of her rights to assessment information. Although Linda had commented earlier in the study (section 4.2.8) that she felt empowered with her support worker, this experience had left Linda feeling disempowered by a lecturer who was determined the assessment would not be discussed

until a later point. It appeared an asymmetry of power between the lecturer and Linda had hindered Linda's learning again and affected her motivation towards writing the assignment (Pantazidou and Gaventa 2016; Sidelinger *et al*. 2012).

Interestingly, Gibson (2012) talks of the frustrations for disabled students when living through difficult learning experiences. She suggested disabled students were trying to understand and manage the changes within themselves as new concepts were being taught alongside managing a disability. The lecturer in the above situation had chosen, for whatever reason to withhold information and discussion around the assessment, although the learning outcomes for assessment would have been present in the module handbook as standard. To a student with dyslexia the withholding of essential assessment information until half way through a module could be seen as oppressive and a real disadvantage to their learning (Beauchamp-Pryor 2012ba). The QAA (2012:13) advised that when assessments were designed it was important to 'take account of different student circumstances'. This was suggested so that students could see clearly what would be expected of them and provided a means for them to practise the planning skills they were developing throughout the course. The QAA (2015:87) suggested:

> *'A key factor for students was whether tasks were evenly spread across all their modules, allowing sufficient time to prepare for and complete each one'.*

This concern around assessments related to all students, disabled or not and it was important to mention there could have been other students who were also concerned about the timing of the assessment information. Upon considering the situation for Linda, it could be that a reasonable adjustment would benefit all students in that assessments could, ideally be presented at the start of a module with regular updates at appropriate points throughout the module.

4.3.5 Issues with feedback on assignments

The data also showed how some of the students experienced oppression and difficulties when they received their assessment feedback and how some lecturers were unaware the students even had a disability. Ellie (stage 2/3 JHS dyslexia) informed:

> *'I did put an assignment in and I spelt somebody's name wrong and I got my assignment back…. I didn't know if I'd passed or failed. I had this snippet comment, "if you can't even spell their name right how are you going to do something in the real world"…. something like that… I sat there and I cried my eyes out…* (Ellie, stage 2/3 JHS dyslexia)

Ellie explained she was very upset at being given very limited feedback on why she had failed her assignment. When Ellie had approached her lecturer to explain that she had dyslexia the lecturer had replied:

> *'There's people with dyslexia worse than you that have done better'*

This was unexpected feedback for Ellie who really struggled with her dyslexia:

> *It is so hard, because I hate having dyslexia…*

Eventually Ellie had made an appointment with her subject head of department who responded:

> *"I didn't know you were dyslexic but while I was reading it, I did wonder if you was"… "I'm sorry about that harsh comment… if I'd have known then I wouldn't have said it".*

In another situation experienced by Ellie she told of handing in another assignment, in the same subject, but a different module:

> *Last year, I sent my assignment into another [lecturer] and she came back and she slammed me. There was no positive feedback, it was all bad and she even mentioned my dyslexia and that I shouldn't go on about that, and I thought, I never have. And I cried my eyes out with that… And I thought how can you do that? I understand that you've got to be a bit harsh sometimes, but also you do the positive feedback…. and she did nothing. You need to know don't you that… you don't want somebody to criticise what you are doing but you need somebody to… to be critical about [it]... in a positive way.* (Ellie, stage 2/3 JHS dyslexia).

Collinson and Penketh's (2010:12) study showed that their students with disabilities had also received similar responses in their assessment feedback. This was an interesting finding as reasonable adjustments were usually applied to avoid disadvantage before an assessment (ECU 2010). This evidence showed that reasonable adjustments needed to be reconsidered and applied during the marking procedure and the assessment feedback. The students had referred to their lecturers as being 'in some way hostile or at least as lacking in empathy' towards their disability during the marking process. Foucault (1991 in Collinson and Penketh 2010:13) would have seen these students as having been 'measured and found wanting (in terms of literacy ability)'. Unfortunately, Ellie had experienced a great deal of distress after receiving such comments about her assessed work and commented that she had tried to develop strategies to improve by attending workshops on dyslexia but these had been unhelpful:

> *I went to the workshop for study skills for the dyslexic and that wasn't at all what I thought it was going to be, it was basically stuff I already knew and I just walked out… I'd wasted an afternoon… I thought it would be more centred on… helping a dyslexic person… and it kind of wasn't… it was already what I knew (Ellie, stage 2/3 JHS dyslexia).*

Although this study did not focus on any particular disability, the majority of respondents (8) had disclosed dyslexia. Interestingly, Ellie was demonstrating some typical responses connected to dyslexia. Burden (2010:1) suggested the confusion, often brought about due to dyslexia, could often 'give rise to further emotional reactions' which may show themselves 'in the form of withdrawal or anxiety about the [work]:

I didn't think I would get this far. And I still don't know If I will ever get to pass really. I just… you know I know people who come to uni and say I want a 2:1, I want this… and I sit there and go, do you know what … I'm coming to uni for me, this is a big accomplishment and if I pass for me… If I come out with a 2:2 or just a pass that would mean more to me than anything, because I never thought I would come to uni (Ellie, stage 2/3 JHS dyslexia).

Although Ellie was feeling depressed and appeared to demonstrate some potential learned helplessness (Seligman 2006) there were elements of hope detected in her voice and the determination to complete her course. Interestingly, this all links back to the discussion on students who were feeling disempowered (Richards and Armstrong 2008; Hagenauer. and Volet (2016) and the asymmetries of power between the lecturer and the student which provided limited agency about what the students could or could not do. It would appear that some students (Ellie, Ruth, Nyanda) were demonstrating traits of potential learned helplessness (Seligman 2006) and uncertainty about what they needed to do next. Whilst others although they may have felt powerless (Linda, Susan), still stood up for their rights (Gibson 2015; Young and Quibell 2000) and tried to confront a system that claimed to be inclusive but which often failed to demonstrate inclusion in practice.

The data so far has offered rich accounts of students' experiences of teaching and learning in the HE classroom. This has offered a complex and multiple range of opinions on the support needed in preparing for assessments and the notion that reasonable adjustments may be needed in providing feedback to disabled students. The following sections cover data findings on the following themes:

- Difficulties with the pace of lectures and the lecturer's voice
- Reading tasks given during class
- Limited lecturer awareness of SEN and disability
- Difficulties of the classroom environment
- Limited lecture notes and Power Points prior to class sessions

4.3.6 Difficulties with the pace of lectures and the lecturer's voice

One of the main difficulties the students discussed was the pace of lectures:

> *I like slower talking… I think… the pace of the… slides [are] moving through too quickly… (Ann, stage 3 EDS dyslexia).*

> *I prefer it when… [lecturers]… take their time… , they don't just flick through [PowerPoints] like that guy that took over… he was like bang bang, you can't even see it before its gone (Simone stage 1, EDS dyslexia).*

According to Fry *et al.* (2003:76) and Khan (2014) lectures were still found to be the most 'widely used teaching method in HE'. The reason for this was that lectures could often 'provide a cost effective means of teaching large groups'. In Hackathorn, Solomon, Blankmeyer, Tennial and Garczynski's (2011:40) study into the different types of teaching styles, they found lectures often involved 'lecturers verbally communicating information to the students… while students feverishly [made] notes'. They referred to lectures as the "information dump" that involved the presenting of information for most of the class time. The lecture was seen to be different to the seminar which tended to involve more interaction and activity. The disabled students in this study suggested there was often limited interaction during lectures and this was highlighted by Hackathorn *et al.* (2011) who suggested lectures often provided limited opportunity for students to interact with one another and the lecturer. Taylor, Mellor and Walton (2008) suggested students often found they had difficulties when the lecturer spoke too quickly. Gibbs (2013) lamented that lectures did not work and yet they were still being used. Her findings suggested the majority of disabled students found lectures difficult, some due to the pace, and others due to the lecturer's voice:

> *They 'talked at you the whole time' and 'didn't ask for any interaction' (Demi stage 2 EDS dyspraxia)*

> The lecturer had expected the students to 'sit there whilst they (the lecturer) 'read out the PowerPoint slides' (S*imone stage one EDS dyslexia).*

'She has lots of PowerPoints and just reads them off' (Simone stage one EDS dyslexia).

'[Lecturer name] is lovely, but she talks… in very flat tones, like, rar rar rar…. And that's it for three hours… so I think that is not very helpful and another lecturer we had who isn't here anymore, she used to… just have lots of slides on PowerPoint and just read it off, I don't know how you are going to learn like that…' (Ann, stage 3 EDS dyslexia)

'If I'm having a bad day, I struggle to get things into my head and remember what they are… [the lecturer's voice] it's just really boring and … monotone' (Jane stage 3 JHS epilepsy).

[Dawn's] lectures are very dull… I feel like I am more tired when I get out of the lecture than when I went in… I feel like I don't know anything from her lectures… (Ann, stage 3 EDS Dyslexia)
They appear to be… *rambling stuff at me with no relevance… Instead of just spieling loads of crap… like every lecture there was so much information so many different theories that meant nothing whereas if she had actually related it to us… (Susan stage 3 EDS dyslexia)*

According to Gibbs (2013) some lecturers were considered to be part of the 'drone warfare' who rated their 'effectiveness of lecturing skills more highly than their students [did]'. Huggins and Stamatel (2015:227) referred to the lecturer approach as 'fostering a passive learning environment' which 'emphasised a one-way flow of information', and which may not engage students adequately. Khan (2014:321) suggested 'a [lecturer] should have adequate energy level with voice and tone variation', otherwise the lecture could become boring and 'the entire class [could go] off to sleep'. This limited engagement in the preparation of inclusive classes could also be linked to the audit culture the lecturers were engaged within (Allan 2010a; Cruickshank (2016). Which again links to the hegemonic discourse of control present in HE.

According to the students in the study, and particularly to those who were studying more than one subject, lectures could last between three and four hours in length, often without a break. These were apparently directive teacher centred sessions and did not include seminars. Such lengthy lectures

involving a didactic or direct teaching approach had according to Barrington (2004), developed a reputation for being mundane, disengaging and monotonous. Borman (2003) suggested a major disadvantage for disabled (and non-disabled) students was their inability to 'focus on a lecture for any considerable length' of time. They advised an ideal attention span for adults was thought to be '10 minutes or so'. If the lecturer was speaking for 80% of the time it could make it 'difficult for [most] students to learn the material' (Borman 2003) and did not provide the inclusive environment many students needed (Smith 2010).

Barrington (2004:432) informed there had been some changes taking place in HEIs in terms of teaching strategies. He argued, however, that HE has been quite slow in shifting the teaching and learning process from the 'conservative and teacher centred' approach that may meet the needs of the majority to a learner centred approach designed to reach all students (Long *et al.* 2011). Fry *et al*. (2003) agreed that such hesitance was not helpful for disabled students suggesting students needed to access the information quickly but found students encountered a barrage of information being delivered at a speed that overwhelmed and disadvantaged them. Barrington (2004:425) continued that although the main function of HE was meant to be 'knowledge acquisition…' lecturers needed to demonstrate more inclusive practice and knowledge on how learners learned. According to Long *et al.* (2011) lecturers also needed to learn how to apply this knowledge in order to facilitate the learning of all students:

> *For one of my lectures… we are up to the fourth lecture and I haven't any idea what this lecture or this module is all about... nothing goes in because... she just talks and talks… I think there is a difference between talking to and talking at you and she is definitely talking at us (Ann, stage 3 EDS dyslexia).*

An interpretation of this suggested that students did not want to be talked at, particularly if they were struggling with short term or working memory difficulties and found it difficult to process information. The majority of students needed time to ensure they could make notes and process the content of the lecture. One suggestion from Nyanda was for:

'Lecturers to take their time', (Nyanda, stage 2 EDS Dyspraxia / dyslexia)

As part of their discussion into how students could engage with lecture content, Light and Cox (2001) suggested students needed time to engage in some reflective activity in order to 'digest' the material and construct their own personal knowledge from it. They believed such activity was part of the development of a relationship between the student and the lecturer. Such a relationship could enable the lecturer to move from being the main transmitter of information to a facilitator who was engaging students in an active learning experience (Gibbs and Tang 2011). The data supported the need for this type of learning where students could benefit from discussing concepts from the lecture either individually or in groups.

I find that having group discussions help… it's nice to talk to other people… (Bev, stage 2 JHS spinal injury)

I seem to excel more… when there's group work and stuff like that… that works for me… and then the person in that group would be writing the stuff down, because I can't do that… which is something I really don't like doing. [I get] somebody else to read… I ask them something... like I say you write it out, I'll present it, and that's kind of my little deal... (Mike, stage 2 EDS dyslexia)

When there are smaller groups... I will interact better (Ellie, stage 2/3 JHS dyslexia)

'When there was interaction with the teachers' and 'not feeling like I've got to explain myself' (Demi, stage 2 EDS dyspraxia).

In relation to this, Hackathorn *et al.* (2011:106) suggested such activities could involve all students by exploring or solving problems to support their learning. By managing the pace of the lecture and providing activities to reflect on the learning taking place, lecturers could provide 'opportunities for students to develop the social dimensions of learning with others'. This could, according to Hackathorn *et al.* (2011:106) 'open up the potential and time for practical learning'. Gibbs and Tang (2011:94) recommended the use of

activities to break up the lecture in order to support students' 'physiological arousal in the brain' and improve their alertness. They considered this to be good learning for all students and should be standard in the planning of a good lecture.

The data suggested interaction between the lecturer and the students was an essential as well as an inclusive position to establish within the classroom. Such interaction could take place through questions and discussion and provided space for the students to share developing insights and queries in an encouraging and active environment. Gibson (2012) referred to this type of interaction as a 'dialogic pedagogy'. Although complex in nature, dialogic pedagogy involved the students and lecturer engaging in subjective discussions within the classroom to identify any gaps in knowledge. Such activity could also provide an opportunity for students to share their informed opinions and reading on the topics being discussed. Gibson (2012:364) suggested lecturers who took the time to listen and converse with their students would be able to support students in developing a social 'connectedness' that would help them feel 'more secure' in 'asking questions' and in sharing their thinking in class. Thus, diminishing the notion of the asymmetry of power between the lecturer and the student.

The notion of dialogic pedagogy related well to the Universal Design for Learning (UDL) discussed in the literature review. Gargiulo and Metcalf (2010; Liasidou 2014) informed UDL was a method of inclusive teaching that could maximise accessibility and equality for disabled students and provided a more flexible learning environment for all students. In addition to this Liasidou (2014 suggested UDL provided enhanced accessibility on the grounds of ability, race, ethnic and other areas of difference. This meant a proactive approach to teaching (rather than a reactive approach) would address shortcomings within the curriculum and enhance accessibility for all students. According to Silver *et al.* (1998) the use of UDL provided a learning environment where lecturers demonstrated they had anticipated learning needs and considered the diverse needs of students in the design of their course (Boyd 2014). Using dialogic pedagogy to encourage more interactive communication ensured a disabled student could be engaged in an

environment that allowed students to express themselves (Gargiulo and Metcalf 2010). Thus, avoiding the attitudinal barriers discussed earlier in the study (Allan 2010a). Such an environment also meant lecturers were able to anticipate needs and develop ‘a caring environment’ (Holbrook *et al.* 2010:682) in order to make reasonable adjustments where necessary.

An important point to bear in mind, however, came from Hackathorn *et al.* (2011). They suggested that whilst using activities in the classroom was often beneficial, especially for disabled students; lecturers should also be aware that such activities might not be inclusive for all students. This was because activities may take time away from delivering additional lecture content. For this reason Hackathorn *et al*. (2011:50) suggested lecturers needed to plan carefully and ‘evaluate whether using active techniques was worth sacrificing class time that could be used to cover other important information’. Another point to summarise this section was that there may be students who may not enjoy such activities and expect the pace of the lecture to be fast and stimulating. This was where a balance was needed during the lecture session, to ensure that where possible a range of needs were satisfied (Florian and Linklater 2010). This point demonstrated how there may be a range of complexities in terms of student learning that needed to be understood and managed in order to ensure inclusivity in practice.

This section suggested the majority of disabled students in the study found the pace of lectures difficult and would benefit from a more interactive approach. Directive lectures needed to be regulated in order to incorporate reasonable adjustments and ensure inclusive practice and policy was adhered to. The incorporation of interactive activities where appropriate were recommended in order to engage and enable all students to participate in an inclusive environment.

4.3.7 Challenges for disabled students whilst reading in the classroom

As eight students in the sample had been identified with dyslexia, there was an abundance of data collected around the difficulties reading in the classroom. According to Finlay and Faulkner (2005) as students were

reading for a degree it was expected they would be able to engage thoroughly with the literature around their chosen subject. Bharuthram (2012:205) suggested there was a 'strong correlation between reading proficiency and academic success' and interestingly, found in her research that:

> 'Many first year… students [no disability is mentioned] were reading at 'frustration level', i.e. the reader reads with less than 90% decoding accuracy and 60% or less comprehension'. (Bharuthram 2012:205)

Bharuthram (2012) suggested most students were likely to struggle initially with the amount of reading they encountered during the first year of their course. Finlay and Faulkner (2005) informed that if the students also had a reading difficulty, such as dyslexia for example, they may encounter even further difficulties.

Mike shared an interesting experience of reading in the HE classroom:

> *A couple of times we've been given reading tasks to do in class and it's been like… this journal will take.. 25 minutes… half an hour to read through and then we'll answer some questions afterwards. I find that terrible… it's really really difficult for me… it was like 26 pages or something…and it's not just me, I mean I've got dyslexia and it takes me a long time to read through this sort of stuff… people are talking… and like I was looking around and I was just seeing people that … weren't reading it either, they were just like … they just lose concentration…. I just made a point of reading it… just kept my head down, read it, I didn't even talk to anyone and I got nowhere near finishing it. …not taking it in at all (Mike, stage 2 EDS Dyslexia).*

Whilst this may have been a useful activity for the lecturer to encourage students to read an academic article, this would not have been an inclusive activity for students with dyslexia. An interpretation of these findings suggested that Mike felt he needed to keep his *'head down…'*. This may have been to demonstrate that he was trying to fulfil the reading task, however, he suggested he could not concentrate due to other students talking. Mortimer and Dupree (2008:48) advised that the majority of learners with dyslexia 'worked much more slowly than their peers' and suggested the behaviour demonstrated by Mike, i.e. limited concentration and keeping his

head down, were seen as classic characteristics found in the students with dyslexia. On a similar note, Nyanda commented on her difficulties of reading in class and how the noise from other students in the room acted as a distraction to her concentration:

> *In one of our lectures every week we have like a big forum of reading and we have like 20 odd minutes or so to read it. We had to discuss about it afterwards. And I'm sitting there flicking through it and it's like… oh my God this is so much… and it's like so hard to just sit there and read it under pressure, everyone is talking in the background, they are having conversations… I'm trying to focus on one aspect… on one page and it's really really difficult and at the end of it we have to kind to talk about it…. I haven't a clue… (Nyanda, stage 2 EDS dyspraxia/dyslexia).*

Susan, who had severe dyslexia also commented on her experience of reading in the classroom:

> *I get loads of hand-outs and they get put on a table and it's like read this and discuss. I can't read it and it's not because I can't read…, I can read really fast, I just don't retain it and I certainly can't retain it when people are talking… I have to go out every time, I go and stand in the corridor and read it and then come back in… I don't like having to do that because people think I'm being ignorant by walking out but I can't … the background noise totally distracts me. I really struggle… I didn't want to make myself look stupid (Susan, stage 3 dyslexia, EDS).*

An interpretation of these findings suggested each of the students were experiencing difficulties whilst reading in their different classrooms. Although their personal needs and experiences were likely to vary, they each related similar concerns of not being able to concentrate and keep up with the task in hand. Each student dealt with the experience in a different way. Mike chose to keep his head down, possibly to avoid detection and possibly avoided being asked to share his insight on the reading. Nyanda appeared to give up, believing she was unable to fulfil the task. This was a concern as Nyanda could be a candidate for the learned helplessness (Seligman 2006). If strategies were not put into place in the near future Nyanda could have experienced further difficulties in her studies. Susan chose to leave the room in order to find some peace and quiet in which to read, although this was embarrassing for her.

There were likely to be different levels of dyslexia present which meant each student would be experiencing different severities of dyslexia and very different learning needs. Interestingly although these experiences were taking place in different classes, there did not appear to be a reasonable adjustment evidenced or an indication that the readings had been provided as pre-readings to prepare the students for such an activity. It appeared as though an activity had been placed within the lecture in order to break up the lecture content. Although moving from a directive lecture into a 30 minute slot on reading may have provided some relief for the lecturer, it had created an additional difficulty for the disabled students in each class.

Mortimore and Dupree's (2008) research suggested dyslexic students tended to work at a different pace and may need different types of reasonable adjustments being put into place to support their learning (HEFCE 2017). The data findings from Nyanda, Susan and Mike demonstrated the strength of this statement. Some examples of reasonable adjustment in this situation might have included using a range of excerpts from articles in order to provide comparison and deeper discussion of a text. A flipped classroom format might also have provided a useful way of engaging students in reading. According to Bishop and Verleger (2013) a flipped classroom involved students in undertaking the homework side of the lecture during class with exercises and discussions after watching a lecture video at home. This could provide students with time at home to read and watch a lecture more than once before engaging in activities in the classroom alongside peers. Another useful resource for students who had a difficulty reading in the classroom was to provide pre-readings that needed to be read in time for the session. Pre-readings according Bharuthram (2012) could provide access for all students and enable them to read and get their head around the content of the reading in time for the lecture.

Although reading was considered to be an essential component in HE, it was evident in the findings that some students found the reading side of the course difficult, and this was mainly due to the pressures placed upon them to read within a set time in the classroom. An awareness of disabled

students was needed and a reasonable adjustment implemented by placing readings on an intranet system prior to the lecture. This also related to UDL techniques and demonstrated an anticipatory and well planned environment for all students (Boyd 2014).

4.3.8 Student experience on the availability of lecture notes before the teaching session

A further difficulty discussed by the participants in the study was the drawback of not being able to view lecture slides or notes before the lecture. According to Fry *et al.* (2003:75) PowerPoint slides had become a regular feature in lectures and had provided 'an air of professionalism' to both presentations and lectures. The uploading of Power Points and notes was found to be inconsistent among the students within this study. In my practice lecturers were requested by senior managers to ensure lecture slides (or notes) were uploaded at least forty eight hours before the session as part of the inclusive strategy. This has been found to be useful over the years, however, the findings suggested not all lecturers followed this protocol and indeed, some lecturers may not have provided PowerPoint slides or notes to supplement their lectures at all. This was viewed as a clear disadvantage by all students.

According to Cornfield, Sallis and Thomas (2009) one of the issues of providing PowerPoint slides or notes before the lecture was that students could become overly reliant on the content produced before the lecture. The findings from this study provided some varying opinion on the uploading of Power Point slides. For example, Carl worked full time, he suggested he had very limited time to print off notes in preparation for a lecture:

> *I'll tell you what drives me mad here... with [lecturers]... when they don't put the notes up, some of them put them up hours before, literally hours before and when you are working and even as a full time student and in my situation… you might be able to get into the library and get them in those two hours… but you have no time to really look at them or anything before... then you've got to get them printed off... I like to look through them first to see what we are doing… and get some idea you know what I mean? (Carl, stage 2 JHS dyslexia).*

I found that some of them [lecturers] in one subject are terrible, they [the notes] are coming out about an hour or something before… some of them are really really bad at it. Some [lecturers] will say "well I'm not putting them up because they will know what I am going to cover" (Carl, stage 2 JHS dyslexia).

You know what's worse than not putting them up? To put them up then change them! The lesson plan… when you get there or change the set of slides, and I think I've printed all this stuff off and now I've got to put them in the bin… cos you're showing me totally different slides. That drives you bonkers that does. (Carl, stage 2 JHS dyslexia)

Carl explained his frustrations around Power Points not being uploaded on time and the occasions when Power Points had been uploaded but had been changed at the last minute. In terms of inclusive practice, there was a dilemma here for both the disabled student, and the lecturer. On the one hand the student may have had a notification in their LSP to indicate that lecture notes needed to be uploaded prior to the lecture. On the other hand, it may have been unreasonable for the lecturer, depending on the lecture content, to upload the updated Power Points or notes prior to the session. This was where Norwich's (2007) theory around the positive negotiation of recognising individual needs and seeking to ensure the needs and rights of both parties were satisfied, could be applied (Young and Quibell 2000). Referring briefly back to Linda's situation in section 4.3.3, where she referred to needing someone to 'play the game' with her. This situation also needed collaborative ownership between the student and the lecturer. Such collaborative ownership could involve the lecturer emailing updated slides to the student to view on a laptop on the day of the class.

The findings also demonstrated some difficulties in terms of lecturers who did not upload any Power Points or notes at all to support student learning. Linda's experience with her lecturer upon requesting Power Point slides needed further exploration:

Lectures notes not available before lectures? Why not? "oh because I don't use PowerPoints". Ok fine… So what he did do was a white background screen, with notes on. And talked at you the whole time. He didn't ask for interaction, he didn't have any kinaesthetic learning, it was just sit there and listen and I will read out…

When I asked about the lecture notes being available ahead of time because I needed to get my head round [the subject] before the lecture… because my processing speed is slow… I said, I really need the lecture notes. "Well I don't do that". Well it is university policy… "no it's not I don't have to". Well I could really do with it, "Well how can I do that, I don't finish my lecture notes till 10 minutes before the lectures". I don't finish my notes until 10 minutes before the lecture? I'm sorry, is it £9,000 a year I'm paying you? It's supposed to be on blackboard a week… a week before hand. There you go… that's my nightmare. (Linda, stage 3 JHS visual impairment/dyslexia)

This was another rich account that demonstrated the asymmetries of power between the lecturer and the student already emerging from the wider data set (see 4.3.1 and 4.3.5) (Richards and Armstrong 2008; Hagenauer. and Volet 2016; Sidelinger *et al*. 2012). This also related to the inequality that needed understanding in terms of the needs of the student; as well as the needs of the lecturer (Beauchamp-Pryor 2012b. Linda suggested her lecturer did not provide lecture notes and was still preparing his session up until ten minutes before the start of their teaching session. Linda believed she needed some time to get her head around the subject matter prior to the lecture because her dyslexia impacted upon her cognitive processing speed. This showed some recognition from Linda of her dyslexia and the need to put strategies in place for herself, in order to prepare for the lecture. Unfortunately her experience of asking for lecture notes was met with a disagreeable response and no offer of a reasonable adjustment. There are indications here again of the audit culture (Allan 2010a; Cruickshank 2016) and the often overwhelming duties undertaken by lecturers. It would appear that engagement in the hegemonic demands of the audit culture do not provide adequate time for lecturers to communicate fully with disabled students. Madriaga *et al.* (2010:653) informed that the practice of providing

lecture notes and or slides was ‘perceived as an entitlement to all disabled students’. Lecture notes were also viewed as ‘an example of… minimum provision’ by HEFCE (1999).

The evasion by the lecturer to provide lecture notes because he was still writing them 10 minutes before the session, could also be viewed as potentially poor teaching from an overwhelmed lecturer trying to satisfy the demands of the performance targets in terms of research output and their teaching practice (Radice 2013). This also related to Hodkinson and Vickerman’s (2009) view on how society may not understand the perspective of a disabled student nor see the relevance of providing such materials. In terms of inclusive practice, a reasonable adjustment to ensure notes were available and a break provided could have benefitted all students. The asymmetries of power and power struggles coming through Linda’s experience suggested the lecturer may not have been prepared to negotiate a reasonable adjustment on this occasion which had created a dilemma for the student. The attitude of Linda’s lecturer had again left her feeling ‘powerless’ in a learning situation… that [did] not appear to understand [her] needs (Albert 2004:4). This dilemma could also be related to Norwich’s (2007) stance on negative negotiation between the student and the lecturer. An interpretation of this situation suggested that rather than making a reasonable adjustment and using a positive negotiation (Norwich 2007), the lecturer had dismissed the student’s rights all together and left her to feel devalued and treated unfairly. These findings add further weight to the claim that the dynamics of power were a strong feature of the students’ lived experiences in this study.

There have been various discussions within my practice as to whether lecture notes or PowerPoint slides should be uploaded for students to view before the lecture. A study from Cornelius and Owen-DeSchryver (2008) was useful to relate to as their study clarified some points around the use of PowerPoints slides or notes and why these might be of benefit to all students. Cornelius and Owen-DeSchryver’s (2008) found that when groups of undergraduate students were given either a complete set of notes or a partial set of notes, the students who downloaded the partial set of notes tended to score better

in their grades than those who had downloaded the whole set of notes. Cornelius and Owen-DeSchryver concluded that those students who had been able to download the partial set of notes had been enabled to think in more depth around the concepts being presented to them. The use of notes from lecturers had enabled their students to encode the material more effectively and orient themselves more effectively to the topics being covered. This in turn assisted the students in 'creating higher quality notes than they may have done otherwise' (Friedman 2013:24). There were challenges though, according to Friedman (2013) with providing too many notes. Friedman (2013:5) suggested lecturers needed to 'avoid giving students [too] much material' in order to avoid the potential reliance on materials being given instead of attending class.

In terms of inclusion I have seen in my own practice situations where student LSPs requested PowerPoints be uploaded earlier to enable the student to make more effective notes. Both Carl and Linda believed the full slides should be uploaded and unchanged before the session, and for students with a support plan this may be a reasonable adjustment that needed to be undertaken by the lecturer prior to the session. However, an understanding of the pressures experienced by lecturers may also need to be understood by students.

This section found lecture notes were an essential component for disabled students on HE courses, especially as the DSA funding was providing fewer note takers to support students. By ensuring notes or Power Points were available, the lecturer could ensure an adjustment had been made that provided an opportunity for all students to prepare for learning in their own time and at their own pace.

In summary this chapter has analysed and discussed the findings for the study and highlighted a host of important insights into the experiences of disabled students in HE. One of the key findings was the frequent imbalance of power in the relationship between professionals in HE and disabled students (Richards and Armstrong 2008; Hagenauer. and Volet (2016).This was often seen as being related to the neo-liberalist view of expectations

within HE which may not necessarily have accommodated the needs of disabled students. Whilst some students had demonstrated a degree of assertiveness and understanding of their rights to support, for the most part, the power and authority to determine support or provision was controlled by the Student Well Being Service or the Lecturer. This often left students feeling powerless (Albert 2004; Richards and Armstrong 2008; Beauchamp-Pryor 2012a) and unsure what they needed to do to support themselves. The findings suggested attempts to negotiate support (Norwich 2013) had evoked difficult attitudes, from lecturers and often left the students feeling frustrated and disadvantaged by the system they thought was supposed to support them.

Interestingly there were also concerns in terms of learner ownership and whose role or responsibility it was to manage student learning. Even though the students had probably been taught about the importance of developing independence within their learning, there were passive, helpless behaviours found in the some students' attitudes (Ellie, Ruth, Nyanda) that bordered on learned helplessness (Seligman 2006; Beauchamp-Pryor 2012a). Such behaviours could be related to the feelings of frustration and powerlessness experienced after encounters with lecturers. Further ownership issues, this time on the part of the lecturers were found in terms of the Assistive Technology which Lersilp (2016) informed was an entitlement for students in the classroom. Unfortunately, some lecturers had not been aware of this right and refused the use of Dictaphones in their classrooms. The findings highlighted what appeared to be a constant barrier for disabled students to effective communication with some of their lectures which resulted in students feeling passive and powerless (Richards and Armstrong 2008; Gosling 2007; Beauchamp-Pryor 2012a; Hagenauer. and Volet 2016).

A further key area within the findings involved the use of tokenistic tick box systems (Skelton 2005) for supporting disabled students. It was as if the support systems had put 'something' in place in order to demonstrate support, which meant the support did not meet the students' individual needs (Shakespeare 2004). The adjustment may have been reasonable from the institution's point of view but not necessarily from the student's point of view.

This meant the reasonable adjustments offered were often unreasonable or embarrassing for the students, and consequently non-refundable as they could not be changed if the student found the adjustment to be unhelpful.

These findings show what a valuable contribution this study has made to what is known about the experiences of disabled students in the university classroom and now moves on to discuss the conclusions and implications in more depth.

Chapter 5 Conclusions and implications

5.1 Introduction

This study set out to explore disabled students' lived experiences of teaching and learning in the changing context of HE. The exploration was undertaken through the use of phenomenological interviews with fourteen disabled students and included engagement with inclusive literature, theory, and inclusive policies in HE. This final chapter serves to offer a conclusion to the research undertaken and its benefits and limitations. To facilitate these concluding remarks, the following structure is used:

- a review of aims and rationale for the study
- a brief review of each chapter
- the strengths and limitations of the study
- future research opportunities
- a summary of the main findings
- implications and recommendations
- dissemination of the study.

5.2 Review of the aims and rationale for the study

The rationale for the study was based on the notion there had been a rise in the numbers of disabled students entering HE (Boyd 2014; Gibson 2012; VanBergeijk *et al.* 2008; Pliner and Johnson 2004). I was mindful of the changing context of HE where the inevitable application of neo-liberalistic rules being emphasised steered student choice towards independence and self-responsibility. Wilkins and Burke (2015) suggested students were expected to be able to align themselves towards future employment as part of the competitive market structures of HE. My practice of working as a lecturer alongside disabled students caused me to become concerned that some of our disabled students may not have been receiving the reasonable adjustments and support their LSPs had outlined in order to support them. The purpose and aims of the study included an exploration into how disabled students' disclosed a disability and how the process of receiving support through an SNA worked; and consequently enabled a LSP to be put into place. This process all took place through the Student Wellbeing Service and

identified a range of dilemmas around disclosure for disabled students. I explored how the agreed support was transferred into reasonable adjustments to enable learning in the classroom, and how the current legislation and literature on learning support for disabled students in HE was sourced in order to ascertain current equality thinking (Equality Act 2010; QAA 2015; HEFCE 2016 Madriaga 2012 and Gibson 2012). I also identified how equality policy was being implemented to enable reasonable adjustments both in LSPs and in the classrooms. A further area of interest explored was how disabled students supported their own learning in HE, and the implications of such if students became dependent on the support systems. As the study progressed I found I was exploring various areas of interest such as the lecturer's opinions on managing disabled students in the classroom, learned helplessness and mental health issues in students. As tempting as it was, I recognised this side tracking and took on board Newby's (2010) advice. This was to identify research boundaries and not seek to answer or explore every area that presented itself in addition to those I was already investigating. Moreover, I recognised these areas were all potential areas for future research studies which are discussed in section 5.6.

5.3 A brief overview of the study

Chapter one of the study provided an overview of my personal and professional approach to the study. Personal experiences of disability within my family engaged me in exploring disability (Barnes and Mercer 2010) and seeking further understanding of the experiences of disabled students within my teaching practice. I found the field of inclusion to be full of complexities and complicated debates which could be discouraging to lecturers who are unfamiliar with disability and the notions of inclusive practice and engaged in duties of performance target setting and research outputs connected to the REF and TEF aspects of the audit culture in HE (Cruickshank 2016; Radice 2013; Allan 2010a). The conclusions to the study show there is a need for clear uncomplicated guidelines to support the improvement of attitudes and practice in maintaining an inclusive experience for disabled students.

The literature I engaged with in chapter two provided a theoretical framework that involved the works of researchers such as Madriaga *et al.* (2011),

Gibson (2012), Florian and Black-Hawkins (2011) and Smith (2010) who had explored inclusive practice and policy in HE. I found the majority of the findings were consistent with the literature, which emphasised the importance of implementing equality policy and theory within HE systems of support. The discussions around inclusive theory such as the medical and social models of disability were difficult to dissect and explain due to the complexity of such debates from Shakespeare (2004); Flood (2005) and Barnes and Mercer (2010). The models of disability can be misinterpreted by educators and still continue to be debated as to their sustainability in practice.

Due to the complexities of the field of inclusion (Rioux 2014; Allan 2010a; Slee 2008) meant the methodological approach needed to be thought through carefully in terms of the best ways to collect information from disabled students. I had not appreciated at the start of the study how in depth and multifaceted the process was going to be. Chapter three involved the reporting of the methodological approach around the philosophical concepts involved in phenomenology and hermeneutics. This was a very different type of research for me as previously I had undertaken studies using a quantitative approach using questionnaires and a much more objective view to research. For this study I had chosen to explore personal experiences which brought the study into the qualitative paradigm and an approach to phenomenology and interpretations involving hermeneutics. As the study was a professional doctorate based on practice, I was constrained to explain and link the philosophical approaches of Husserl (1973) and Heidegger 1967, 1998) in terms of inclusive practice. This was done in order to recognise the theoretical stance of phenomenology and hermeneutics and yet avoid moving into any great depths of philosophical thinking. This meant I could remain within the boundaries of professional doctoral practice. As the study involved the ‘lived experiences of students, phenomenological interviews were chosen as the most efficient tool to explore such experiences.

The interview process took place relatively smoothly in between a busy workload, although the transcribing and analysis were extremely time

consuming. Clough and Nutbrown (2012) had warned about this, however, the rewards of such time and effort were enlightening and rich in data. Originally the analysis was collated into themes and key terms using thematic and narrative analysis procedures. This analysis supported the first draft of findings. I thought this method of analysis was too descriptive for such sensitive and subjective information and appeared to follow Husserl's descriptive phenomenology. This is thought to take on a more objective and descriptive view of the concepts being discovered (Smith *et al*. 2009). The data was inundated with multiple truths, to such an extent it was often difficult to find parallels between the students' individual experiences. I found that by returning to the transcripts frequently I was able to engage further into each student's individual experience. This provided stronger data, which was more authentic and provided opportunities for deep reflexive thinking.

Another issue with the analysis stage was that of interpretation which I believe was due to the range of contexts involved (Rioux 2014). The context for the students was their own individual thinking and changing of moods within their own consciousness and their potentially different backgrounds and cultures; to which I only had limited access. My context and stance was one of anticipation and wanting to learn and improve my practice. I recognised my positionality as a lecturer would ultimately have some impact upon what the students revealed and that my age and relative knowledge of disability may have placed me in a more knowledgeable position from the students' perspective (Drake and Heath 2011). Amidst all the complexities of context, I also had to trust the students accounts were true (Shenton 2004) and to ensure my interpretation was credible. I found the interpretation interesting but an often taxing process which required meticulous attention to detail (Newby 2010). The complexities and intricacies with such a sample were so incalculable, it would not have been possible to interpret fully all of the necessary areas for consideration. I found I had to immerse myself in the transcripts and read them through many times. I believe this was a difficult process because qualitative data analysis had been seen to be a study of people and their lives (Newby 2010). This meant the data was often concerned with everyday activities which could be taken for granted. I found as I read the transcripts I was asking questions such as, 'so what'? and

What can I make of this? Often there did not appear to be any answers to these questions. I managed to overcome this problem by asking further questions such as what? where? when? how? or why? This helped to highlight some of the important issues and to dig deeper into what might be happening in the students' experiences (Farrell 2012).

Due to the complex nature of the findings the decision was made to write chapter four as the findings, analysis and discussion. The findings and analysis were so substantial, it was considered more comprehensible to select important issues and follow a process of analysis and interpretation in coherent themes. Writing the chapter in this way also enabled me to link concepts where possible to other related areas as shown on the conceptual framework diagram (see section 3.13). The conceptual framework was drawn up in the early stages of the study to enable some form of control and to assist me in remaining within the boundaries of the proposed study (Newby 2010). Although this was a useful framework I did add some concepts such as learned helplessness and 'otherness' as the research progressed.

5.4 Reflection on the study's strengths

It was evident that depending on their particular disability, the majority of students who participated in the study were experiencing barriers to their learning (Beauchamp-Pryor 2012b; Madriaga *et al*. 2011; Gibson 2012; Smith 2010; Pumprey 2008; and Barrington 2004). This included barriers encountered in accessing support through the Student Wellbeing service, approaching their lecturers, accessing the curriculum and the assessment in the classroom. Students' perceptions varied in this sense because some students were more assertive than others (Linda, Kirsty) and were able to fight for the support they needed or were able to enable themselves if the support they were provided with was not sufficient (Jacklin and Robinson 2007). On the other hand, the majority of students tended to remain silent because they worried about approaching support staff or lecturers (Beauchamp-Pryor 2012b; Smith 2010). It was evident the quality of the interviews enabled such rich data to come to light along with the time dedicated to interpreting and analysing the students' complex opinions and multiple truths. The interviews were able to capture the voices of disabled

students and it was found that the majority of disabled students in the study were feeling disadvantaged.

Another strength of the study was the dissemination to colleagues both internally and externally (Dinham and Scott 2008). Disseminating the research provided colleagues and the Student Wellbeing service the opportunity to respond to the study's findings and provide additional information, clarification and validation for the study. A further strength of the study was my recognition to conduct the study ethically (Costley and Gibbs 2006; Oliver 2010). I did experience some challenging moments, and as an early researcher needed to be able to stay in control of my emotions and manage those awkward moments with a professional and ethical attitude.

5.5 The limitations of the study

Careful efforts were made to remain ethical and show care and concern throughout the whole study (Costley and Gibbs 2006). There were times though, when students showed elements of anxiety, and I wanted move from my role as researcher into that of a counsellor (Drake and Heath 2011). I wanted to rant out aloud alongside them or hold them close to sooth their aching pleas for support. Such involvement was not ethical and avoided. In the confines of my home office, however, I was able to use my reflexive practice to consider my position in the research (Malterud 2001) and reflect, ponder and theorise over what I had experienced myself and where improvement might be made (Boyd 2014; Drake and Heath 2011). There were areas I would have liked to have explored in more depth. This included the students' experiences of support during compulsory schooling and how such support compared with the support they were now receiving in HE. Data was collected around this area, however, I was constrained by word count and in staying within the boundaries and scope of the study. I wondered if the study could have included more information on student mental health, but recognised that this was also another area to explore at some future point. There were also limitations in terms of the study taking place in only one university. I have endeavoured to represent a population of disabled students by interviewing students who were studying another subject alongside my own teaching subject, and interviewing students across all three stages of the

degree in order to provide some triangulation (Newby 2010). Although the study was restricted to a smaller sample of students and may not represent the voice of all students in the university, the data gathered was so substantial, the sample size for this study was found to be more manageable. This meant there were still areas to be explored which could involve research into inclusive practice in other subjects and this could include other universities in order to further validate the concerns this study has highlighted.

5.6 Future directions

There were some concepts that arose in the discussion that provided more insight into the interpretation. This included discussions around student identity, self-efficacy and learned helplessness. Further concepts such as student mental health issues and anxiety were also very interesting. The development of these concepts as mentioned above, were really out of the scope of this study. I wanted to focus on the improvement of inclusive practice and social justice in HE but it was evident that each of these areas were essential for further research. A consideration of these areas would be even more important now due to the cuts in the Disabled Students Allowance (Havergal 2015; HEFCE 2017).

Another area requiring further exploration was inclusive curriculum design. A research study into how lecturers could adopt the Universal Design for Learning into their curriculum material would be valuable to ensure inclusive practice was amalgamated into courses (Liasidou 2014). There are likely to be predicaments in this area as lecturers would be expected to provide more inclusive sessions in light of the new Teaching Excellence Framework (DBIS 2016; HEFCE 2017).

A further area of interest would be to provide a voice for lecturers in terms of their experiences in managing disabled students and equality issues within the classroom. The study has provided powerful evidence to support the need for training which would enhance this area and support lecturers in being able to identify and manage more appropriate reasonable adjustments in the future.

5.7 Summary of the findings

One of the main themes coming through from the findings suggested the reasonable adjustments being put into place for disabled students were repeatedly found to be *unreasonable adjustments*, or *embarrassing adjustments.* The initial dilemma of disclosing a disability had often brought about difficulties for the student in terms of confidence or just wanting to prove to they did not need support. Santuzzi (2013) suggested this was possibly connected to the student's perceptions of themselves and how others may have labelled them as disabled (Fuller 2008). Once a reasonable adjustment had been implemented, the findings identified how some lecturers were not prepared to negotiate (Norwich 2007) or make any adjustments to the delivery or content of curriculum or assessment. This meant students such as Ellie, Susan and Linda became involved within asymmetries of power or confrontations with lecturers that often placed them in a powerless position in order to uphold their rights (Sidelinger *et al.* 2012; Cranton 2006; Young & Quibell 2000). Although the students had been willing to negotiate support (Norwich 2007), the response from lecturers often left them feeling 'passive' and 'powerless' (Richards and Armstrong (2008:21; Albert 2004).

Around 50% of students in the study appeared to have limited understanding about their disability and were unsure how the disability would affect their learning. It also appeared students believed they were expected to know what support they needed even though they had only just received a diagnosis of disability. In a short space of time a decision had to be made with regards to the provision which was non-refundable and often did not meet the 'requirements' of disabled students or 'enable participation' (Powell 2003:9). The provision provided for disabled students was not always helpful and individual needs for learning did not always appear to have been recognised (Shakespeare 2004) or appeared to be ignored (Beauchamp-Pryor 2012a). As a result of this, students who tried to be assertive and take some ownership over their studies, often found themselves in a non-negotiable power struggle as mentioned above, either with the Student Wellbeing Service or their lecturer.

On the whole, although the students believed they had a right to a change in

their provision (Gibson 2015; Young & Quibell 2000), and they often found they had to withdraw their deliberations and manage on their own (Reivich *et al.* 2012). This left students such as Ann, Linda and Jane feeling disappointed and in some situations, more dependent on the system as they displayed characteristics of confusion, distress and uncertainty about what they needed to do next (Richards and Armstrong 2008; Reivich *et al.* 2012). The issue around the ownership of learning and whose role it was to ensure that independent learning had taken place was also a valuable insight into the disabled students lived experiences of HE.

The data suggested a need for more clarity and collaboration in the process of communication between the student, the Student Wellbeing Service and the lecturer (Gibbs and Tang 2007). There was inconsistency in the way provision was communicated to students which meant a much more consistent approach was needed that described the different disabilities more fully and provided more personalised strategies. More clarity was also needed for students on what they needed to do if the provision was not helpful. The findings suggested the SNA was often a tick box, tokenistic process (Miesenberger *et al.* 2010) that did not necessarily consider the individual needs of the student (Shakespeare 2004). Such evidence suggested the systems were not compliant with the Equality Act (2010) in putting reasonable adjustments into place (HEFCE 2017).

It also appeared most lecturers were unable or unwilling to engage in the discussion and co-construction and negotiation of support strategies (Martin 2006). This may have been attached to the audit culture discussed by Allan (2010a) also Cruickshank (2016) which involved lecturers in many more additional duties than lecturing. There was a need for lecturers to demonstrate more willingness to communicate around additional adjustments (Gibson 2012) in order to ensure adjustments met the individual needs of disabled students. There was also a need for lecturers to communicate effectively around assessments and to provide information earlier in their modules. There were suggestions that students often felt vulnerable and anxious about assessments (Light and Cox 2001) and needed to know about and understand the assessment information early in the module. Feedback

on assignments was another area of concern. It was evident that reasonable adjustments needed to be made to ensure more detailed feedback alongside a critical dialogue for improvement provided. This feedback was valuable in terms of enabling the learning of all students whether they had a disability or not and I would conclude that this should be standard procedure (Boyd 2014).

The negative attitude of some lecturers towards disabled students was also problematic. Whilst some lecturers were willing, approachable and readily made the necessary adjustments, the study found around 50% of lecturers were aloof and appeared to disregard the needs of disabled students (Liasidou 2014; Madriaga 2011). Again, this may have been because the lecturers were involved in research duties and engaged within the neo-liberalist views of the audit culture which expected lecturers to publish or perish (Boateng 2012). Some lecturers may have seen meeting such targets as being a more important part of their role (Allan 2010b). Such aloofness had had an impact, however, on students such as Ann, Ruth, Simone, Ellie and Mike were fearful to approach their lecturers and were worried they may be labelled as disabled (Fuller 2008; Beauchamp-Pryor 2012a) and seen to be underachievers. Given these points, I would suggest there was a need for lecturers to receive more in-depth training on LSPs and disability policy. This would contribute to creating positive attitudes and enhance disability awareness (Liasidou 2014:130). Such would also enable all lecturers to be made aware of the essentiality of inclusive practice; and that such policy was a quality requirement and legal responsibility, and not optional (HEFCE 2017; HEFCE 2016; QAA 2015; ECU 2010). A challenge here of placing mandatory training on lecturers could lead to even more tokenism due to work load difficulties. With this in mind, time would need to be provided to ensure inclusion policies were being adhered to with monitoring through teaching observation where necessary.

Assistive technology including the Dictaphone and most of the software was found to be a tokenistic, tick boxing exercise (Miesenberger *et al.* 2010). The Dictaphones were largely unhelpful due to the amount of time it took to listen to the lecture again and the software was often difficult to negotiate and too

time consuming to use. The findings suggested the software was not suitable in most situations and the training was largely not meeting students' needs. Whilst there were some positive experiences around the use of assistive technology, the study found some lecturers did not allow Dictaphones in the classroom. There was also evidence that lecturers did not use additional technology over and above what was already available in the classroom in their teaching (Alnandi, 2014). Assistive technology was largely unhelpful and in its potentially most helpful form such as the intranet systems e.g. Blackboard, it was still not experienced as helpful due to lecturers' non-compliance with minimum expectations. Even though according to Lersilp (2016) students had a legal right to assistive technology. This did appear preposterous and wasteful of the opportunities provided in this HE institution. Given these points, there is a highly active and supportive technology team who may find this information surprising. I would conclude that the implementation and use of assistive technology would be another useful item to add to teaching observations and appraisals.

In terms of the teaching and learning approaches used in the HE classroom some disabled students found the pace of directive, and often teacher centred lectures difficult to manage in their learning. The use of three to four hour lectures with limited interaction were still used in some subjects and such lectures were found by the students to be tiring and overall a poor learning experience (Light and Cox 2001).The data suggested that where activities and opportunities to discuss concepts were present in lectures that such was valued by the majority of students and provided a better relationship between the students and their lecturer (Gibbs and Tang 2011). The use of dialogic teaching as suggested by Gibson (2012) also enabled students to speak out with more confidence and feel more able to approach a lecturer when there were difficulties. The avoidance by lecturers to provide lecture notes or Power Points prior to lectures were found to be problematic for students. Although the literature (Madriaga 2011; Cornelius and Owen-DeSchryver's 2008) clearly sustains the usefulness of such in supporting the preparation for a lecture; however, some lecturers prefer to keep students in suspense. The study has provided a strong argument for the provision of basic Power Points and pre-readings, particularly those readings planned for

use during the class.

Overall, the majority of students were found to be enabling their own learning alongside some support from the Student Wellbeing Service and their lecturers. The participants in this study were largely independent, mainly because they had to be, but also because most students wanted to be. The students were found to be making choices of self-empowerment towards independence and self-responsibility (Wilkins and Burke 2015). The findings suggested the majority of disabled students were offered some form of support but that this support was often unhelpful and could not be changed once the support had been accepted, at least until the following year. Most students encountered asymmetries of power (Sidelinger *et al*. 2012) and power struggles when they approached members of staff to discuss their disability. Whilst there were some positive and reasonable adjustments made, the majority of students found the adjustments were unreasonable or embarrassing, and left them feeling powerless, disappointed and in some cases, helpless (Albert 2004). Although well-meaning, the provision appeared to be a tokenistic and a tick boxing exercise that was closely connected to the funding available and superficially complying with the Equality Act (2010) and QAA (2012) standards for inclusive practice (HEFCE 2017). As such, the findings suggested the environments the students were part of were often awash with unsettling experiences that were often far from inclusive in nature (Allan 2010a).

5.8 Implications

The study has raised issues around the need for a change in the culture of HE with regards to inclusive practice in terms of meeting the individual needs of disabled students and providing a less power based environment (Gosling 2007). The implications for not enhancing inclusive practice in HE could mean disabled students continued to experience disadvantage and difficulties in accessing curriculum content and assessment. This means students who do not feel they can assert themselves (Tinklin, Riddel and Wilson 2004) or develop their own coping strategies because they believed they should remain silent, such as Ann, Ellie, Demi, Nyanda and Simone; who did not receive the provision they needed (Smith 2010). Disabled would find it more

difficult to be empowered towards future employment (Wilkins and Burke 2015) especially within the current context of neo-liberalism and expectations within HE as it continues to seek to produce a skilled, qualified, flexible, and adaptable workforce rather than a society tolerant to difference (Wilkins and Burke 2015).

A recommendation was suggested in terms of providing more workshops for students in managing disability and developing independence, assertiveness and resilience. This would enable students to access and understand further the Rights, Responsibilities and Regulations found within their university policy and work more collaboratively towards a more positive negotiation of support with lecturers in managing a difficult situation (Norwich 2007). Thus moving away from an act of dependency, if the support did not work out as requested (Gargiulo and Metcalf 2012). A further recommendation would be that disabled students needed a clearer way to challenge shortcomings in provision if support was not provided by lecturers, particularly if the support has been recommended and outlined on the LSP.

It was recognised within the study there were already a range of training sessions held regularly in the focus university. More in-depth training in inclusive teaching and Universal Design for Learning as outlined by Gargiulo and Metcalf (2010) would be beneficial to both staff and students, where a deeper awareness of disability, equality policy such as the Equality Act (2010) and inclusive design for teaching needed to be encouraged. There was also a need for emphasis on attendance at such workshops as being mandatory to ensure all lecturers were aware of a range of disabilities and how to personalise adjustments to course design (through negotiations with students) (Norwich 2007; Smith 2010). It was evident that an awareness of a disability would not be enough if action was not put into place to adopt inclusive practice strategies and provide personalised reasonable adjustments (Shakespeare 2004; HEFCE 2017). A recommendation to include inclusive practice more overtly on the teaching observation documentation may also provide more evidence of monitoring inclusive practice in classrooms.

A review of what is meant by a reasonable adjustment (UNESCO 2006; HEFCE 2017) and what this means for the university and students also needs to take place. Although ‘adjustments to teaching practices could be difficult to obtain (Tinklin, Riddel and Wilson 2004:2) it was found to be essential that adjustments were made in order to meet the individual needs of students as far as possible (Shakespeare 2004). One dilemma could be that a reasonable adjustment was not possible due to limited facility or funding. If this was the case, this would need to be identified early and communicated with the student so that they were aware of why adjustments were not viable. Madriaga *et al.* (2011) suggested there may be a whole range of reasons why a reasonable adjustment could not be directly put into place. Such reasoning may be linked to decisions around professional practice and the ethics involved. There may be decisions that needed to go through an official process which could often take some time to implement. It was also important to recognise that although reasonable adjustments may have been put into place in good faith, such adjustments may not actually have been the solution that enabled access for the disabled student. Such solutions may have been part of the tick box culture (Miesenberget *et al.* 2010; Skelton 2005) or the adding of ‘something’ to show that an adjustment had been made to fulfil the minimum policy requirements (HEFCE 1999). This process will be difficult to change, however, the findings have identified that such practice should be avoided. It needs reiterating though that lecturers need to understand that reasonable adjustments are a policy requirement and not optional and adjustments should be put into place where possible (HEFCE 2017). For example: the cases of Jane and Ellie who were both refused the use of Dictaphone in class. It will also be important for universities to develop the digital competencies of lecturing staff so that they can operate a more inclusive practice that supports more accessible learning for all (Lerslip 2016).

The study has also highlighted the journey many disabled student’s experience as they disclose disability and progress through diagnosis and an identification of study needs. This was an area unknown to the majority of lecturers and where there was limited literature in terms how the Student

Wellbeing Services worked. There was potential for future studies in this area to provide more insight for lecturers on this process. A shared responsibility for supporting disabled students between the Student Wellbeing Service and lecturers would enable all of the above training and awareness of disability to be much more effective (Gibbs and Tang 2007). This would ensure a shared collaboration and provide more understanding of the individual needs of both the lecturer and the students in attempting to provide an inclusive environment for all students.

5.9 The contribution to knowledge

This study has provided the following major contributions to the field of inclusion and disability in an HE context.

Firstly, the study has provided a detailed and authentic account of the lived experiences of disabled students in HE. These accounts illustrated in detail, the asymmetries of power (Pantazidou and Gaventa 2016; Sidelinger *et al*. 2012) found between the lecturer and the student. The seemingly anodyne nature and consequences of 'reasonable adjustment' are revealed as hegemonically pernicious in the lives of many of the students whose stories have been told by this study. Most notably, what is purported to be 'reasonable' for the disabled student is rendered 'unreasonable' by the managerialist culture mandated in a neo-liberal culture of HE governance (Radice 2013), as well as being considered to be burdensome (Yates 2015).

5.9.1 Authentic experiences of disabled students in HE

The original knowledge the study involved the authentic experiences of disabled students' in HE and their often oppressed and disadvantaged journeys in gaining the correct support for their individual needs (Gibson 2012; Liasidou 2012; Allan 2012b; Shakespeare 2004). The study highlighted concerns around a sample where for the majority, 'rights had been denied' (Liasidou 2014:42; Young and Quibell 2000). Although the above literature had discussed the oppression and disadvantage of disabled students, this study demonstrated that disabled students were still struggling to get the

support they need. Even though the HEFCE (1999) had put into place minimum requirements for HE, students are still in the awkward position of having to 'repeatedly […] ask for [adjustments], to no avail'. (Tinklin *et al*.2004:2). The data clearly demonstrates disabled students were expected to remain passive and how they were constructed as passive recipients (Beauchamp-Pryor 2012a; Richards and Armstrong 2008; Seligman 2006). The study reinforced current thinking in terms of oppression in HE (Allan 2010a and Beauchamp-Pryor 2012b) and the silencing of disabled students (Seale 2010; Beauchamp-Pryor 2012b). This does not serve student rights in terms of the discourse of social justice in providing an equal opportunity for all students to access the support needed. Evidence of oppression was provided by the attitudes of lecturers towards disability and student capability (Ellie and Linda). I was surprised to find the limitations of student agency and the passivity mentioned above (Richards and Armstrong 2008; Reivich *et al.* 2012). This linked often to students who appeared to be waiting for somebody else to sort out their learning needs for them. The powerlessness found in students alongside the asymmetries of power with lecturers appeared to be the norm rather than there being a supportive autonomous and successful process of learning (Allan 2010a).

This study took an original process according to Baptista, Frick, Holley, Remmik, Tesch, Kaelyn (2015) by considering the lived experiences of a unique group of disabled students in HE. The authentic student experiences considered individual disclosure of disability, the provision available and how the support was provided (or not) in the classroom. Allan (2010a), Beauchamp-Prior (2012b) and Gibson, (2015) outlined the oppression and disadvantage experienced by disabled students in HE classrooms and the attitudes of lecturers towards the capability of such students (Smith 2010). This study contributed to the field by confirming such modes of oppression and disadvantage were still being experienced by disabled students. This created new and authentic knowledge for practice by emphasising that the majority of students had very little choice but to take control of their own learning or find alternative ways of managing when the support was not helpful or was overruled by lecturers. Neoliberalism achieved its goal here,

however, paradoxically, some students were also passive about disclosing a disability or approaching lecturers believing there was an expectation to be independent or to be stigmatised with a label they did not want. This related again to the neo-liberalist philosophy suggested by Saunders (2007) whereby students were expected to possess the personal attributes that would align them with the enterprise culture of employability within the economy.

Unfortunately for some disabled students, such attributes may not be present or the students may not have planned to place themselves in such a culture of entrepreneurship and employability. The notion that all students would be able to 'generate economic activity and be free to make consumer choices' in order to 'market' themselves may not be the goal of all students. The acknowledgment that knowledge [was] viewed as a 'marketable commodity rather than the result of a collective social endeavour' (Radice 2013:412) may be true for many students. However, some students may still choose to study for pleasure. These students may need facilitation or coaching in order to avoid the paradox of learned helplessness or forced help-self-ness.

5.9.2 Asymmetries of power between lecturers and students in the classroom

A recognition of the neo-liberalist hegemonic control discussed as a discourse within HE was another contribution to knowledge. The majority of lecturers were involved in the audit culture of HE (Cruickshank 2016:2; Allan 2010a) which expected professionals to 'deliver excellence in terms of teaching and research outputs'; as well as managing the conventions of teaching and communicating with students. This was developing knowledge gained for my practice and will be interesting for other practices to relate to and learn from.

A teacher centred attitude (Gibbs and Tang 2011) and a focus on the market economy to ensure essential growth in HE and in sustaining the economy (Burke 2012) could have contributed towards the asymmetries of power found between lecturers and students. This again was new knowledge within my practice and should be useful for lecturers to relate to as they anticipate inclusive strategies and plan for inclusion in the classroom in the future.

5.9.3 Opening up concerns around the idea of a reasonable adjustment

A further contribution to the field has been in the consideration of the term reasonable adjustment. The exposure of the pernicious nature of the term 'reasonable adjustment' suggested that at best there was often only limited support for students and at worst the adjustment could cause hardship and embarrassment. The ECU (2010) reminded that HEIs needed to put systems into place that could be activated by disabled students and enable an accessible learning environment to benefit all students. The study found reasonable adjustments had been put into place for some students who were unsure what adjustments they actually needed. On finding the adjustments unhelpful, and returning to enquire after alternative support as outlined in their LSP, the students found the funding had been spent. There was no alternative until a year later when the LSP was reviewed. The idea that an adjustment in provision cannot be changed or altered if found to be unhelpful is unreasonable. Such drawbacks caused students to feel anxious and contributed towards feelings of powerlessness. The HEFCE (2017:24) made it very clear that the 'onus [was] **always** on the [HEI] to justify (and evidence where necessary) its approach to reasonable adjustments'. It may be that the term reasonable adjustment was to be used as a reciprocal term used by students and staff with different meanings attached. Much like the term inclusion, there does not appear to be a true definition (Florian and Black-Hawkins 2011). This study had created a dilemma for the use of the term 'reasonable adjustment' and argued that the provision offered may not be reasonable after all.

The findings of this study have enabled 'unreasonable adjustments' to become visible and as such could be defined as a term that serves only the interests of the HEI rather than removing barriers for disabled students. Unreasonable adjustments have been found to be characterised by their poor match between provision and student need and this can clearly be seen to fall within an audit serving managerialist context within HE (Radice 2013).

5.9.4 An insight in to the Student Wellbeing Service

New knowledge for lecturers was gained through data collected on the process of either disclosing a disability or being identified with a disability within the SWS Service. The process of disclosure was considered confidential and included a study needs assessment and the discussion of provision and funding. Most lecturers were curious about what happened to disabled students in the Student Wellbeing Service and this study provided insight into this process. Of particular interest was the process around the Study Needs Assessment and how provision was allocated to students. The study found inconsistencies that needed addressing in this area which prompted research projects within the SWS. For lecturers trying to manage the gap between' knowledge and practice' (Ajani and Moez 2011:3927) and understanding what was happening in terms of cuts to the DSA funding (Willets 2014; Havergal 2015); this new knowledge on the support process served as a valuable insight into the journey of the disabled student trying to access support from the SWS.

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5.10 Dissemination of the study

According to Dinham and Scott (2008:45) there are a range of dissemination methods and tools used to disseminate research. Some of these include the presenting of research at conferences, publishing in journals, writing books and chapters and embedding the research within the curriculum on course and providing frameworks, websites and forums for further discussion (also Hemmings, Rushbrook and Smith 2007). I found using conferences useful to disseminate this study as it provided opportunities to discuss findings with likeminded professionals in HE.

This study was disseminated within the focus university at a range of departmental meetings and the focus university's conferences. The study was also disseminated at two further conferences held by universities in Midlands and in the South of England. Discussion from colleagues across universities validated the need for the research as the majority of colleagues agreed the issues being explored were issues that needed to be addressed.

This study has evoked a wide range of perception and opinion from students, support staff and lecturers within the focus university. The data collected was initially to support my own development of inclusive practice, however, I found the data had not only been beneficial for my colleagues but also to a wider audience across the realms of HE. I believe the raw disabled student had been given an opportunity to share their voice as well as the 'lived experiences' (Gibson 2012).

This study will now take its place alongside the inclusive literature I have passionately read and referred to, which has raised awareness of the disabled student's voice in terms of disadvantage in HE. It is evident HE must continue to encourage disabled students to engage with learning and continue to identify ways to make the reasonable adjustments that will ensure all students can graduate with success. I was delighted to see how the majority of disabled students in this study gained good degrees. I applaud them and feel heartfelt pride towards their great efforts despite their difficulties to achieve their dream. I would have liked to have seen these students experience less anxiety and powerlessness towards accessing support, and more autonomous independence with support as needed, in their pursuit of academia. As HE recognises the voice of disabled students and changes its culture to provide more inclusive practice for all, the future of HE will hopefully see the continual rise in disabled students (Gibson 2012) and embrace the contribution that disabled students have made so far and will continue to make within our classrooms.

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APPENDICES

Appendix One

Appendix two

Rosemary Shepherd

From: [redacted]
Sent: 15 July 2013 20:22
To: Rosemary Shepherd; [redacted]
Subject: RE:

Hi Rosemary

I can provide you with the statistical data that you need. We should be able to provide other data that may be useful e.g. degree classification, retention rate of students with support plans, if it is needed.

Support plans have been produced on PeopleSoft for the last 2 academic years, which allows us to accurately provide this type of data. Reporting on data prior to that time is more difficult. Therefore, if you are completing this piece of research now, we will only be able to provide full data for 2 academic years, as the data that we can provide pre academic year 11/ 12 is limited.

Once you have gone through ethics committee, we can help facilitate your research, by sending your invitation to take part in the study to students with support plans.

Let me know if you want to discuss further.

Thanks

[redacted]

[redacted]
Student Wellbeing Service Manager
B Block
[redacted]

Tel [redacted]
Fax [redacted]

www.derby.ac.uk/student-wellbeing

Compare with other unis?
What do they do?
How?
What can we learn from them?

From: Rosemary Shepherd
Sent: 15 July 2013 16:33
To: [redacted]
Subject:

Hi [redacted] Hi [redacted]

I wonder if you could point me in the right direction for finding out some statistics about students with support plans at the University of Derby and who I need to talk to in order to get permission to talk to students who have a support plan.

As part of my EdD I am planning to research into whether learning support plans work, and need to find out initially:

1

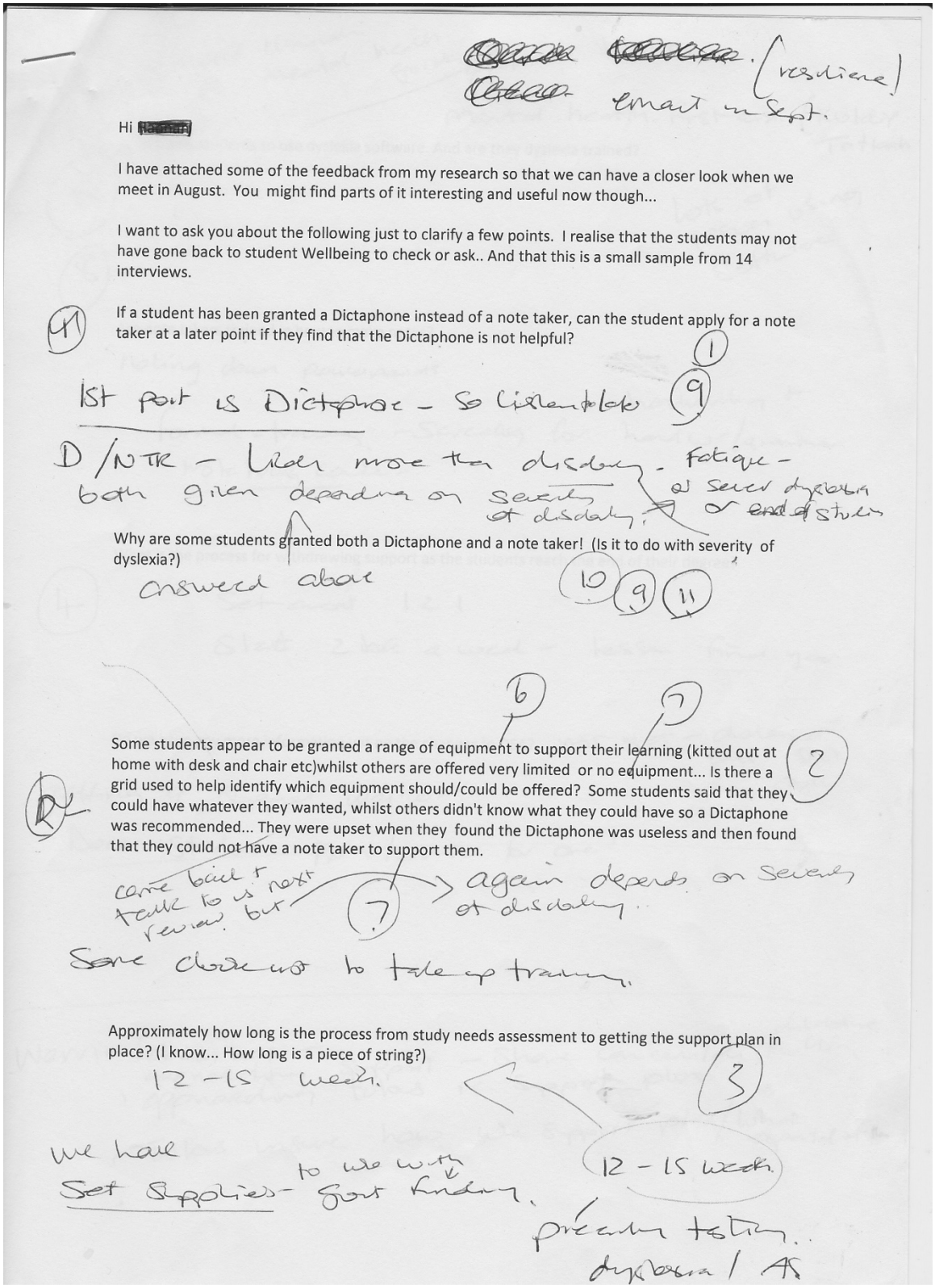
- How many students we have with learning support plans at the university? I know that 10% of students have a support plan, but where would I find actual numbers from?
- How many students receive a support plan each year?

Thanks for any help you can be.

Rosemary

Rosemary Shepherd
Senior Lecturer in Education Studies
Stage two Progression tutor/SEND Pathway Leader
School of Education & Social Sciences
Faculty of Education, Health and Sciences
[redacted] Road
[redacted]
Direct line [redacted]
Office E109a

Meeting notes – Clarification meeting with the Student Wellbeing Service.



Hi [redacted]

I have attached some of the feedback from my research so that we can have a closer look when we meet in August. You might find parts of it interesting and useful now though...

I want to ask you about the following just to clarify a few points. I realise that the students may not have gone back to student Wellbeing to check or ask.. And that this is a small sample from 14 interviews.

If a student has been granted a Dictaphone instead of a note taker, can the student apply for a note taker at a later point if they find that the Dictaphone is not helpful?

1st port is Dictaphone – so Listen to lots

D/NTR – Listen more than disabled – Fatigue – both given depending on severity of disability

Why are some students granted both a Dictaphone and a note taker! (Is it to do with severity of dyslexia?)

answered above

Some students appear to be granted a range of equipment to support their learning (kitted out at home with desk and chair etc)whilst others are offered very limited or no equipment... Is there a grid used to help identify which equipment should/could be offered? Some students said that they could have whatever they wanted, whilst others didn't know what they could have so a Dictaphone was recommended... They were upset when they found the Dictaphone was useless and then found that they could not have a note taker to support them.

come back + talk to us next review but again depends on severity of disability.

Some check ups to take up training.

Approximately how long is the process from study needs assessment to getting the support plan in place? (I know... How long is a piece of string?)

12 – 15 weeks.

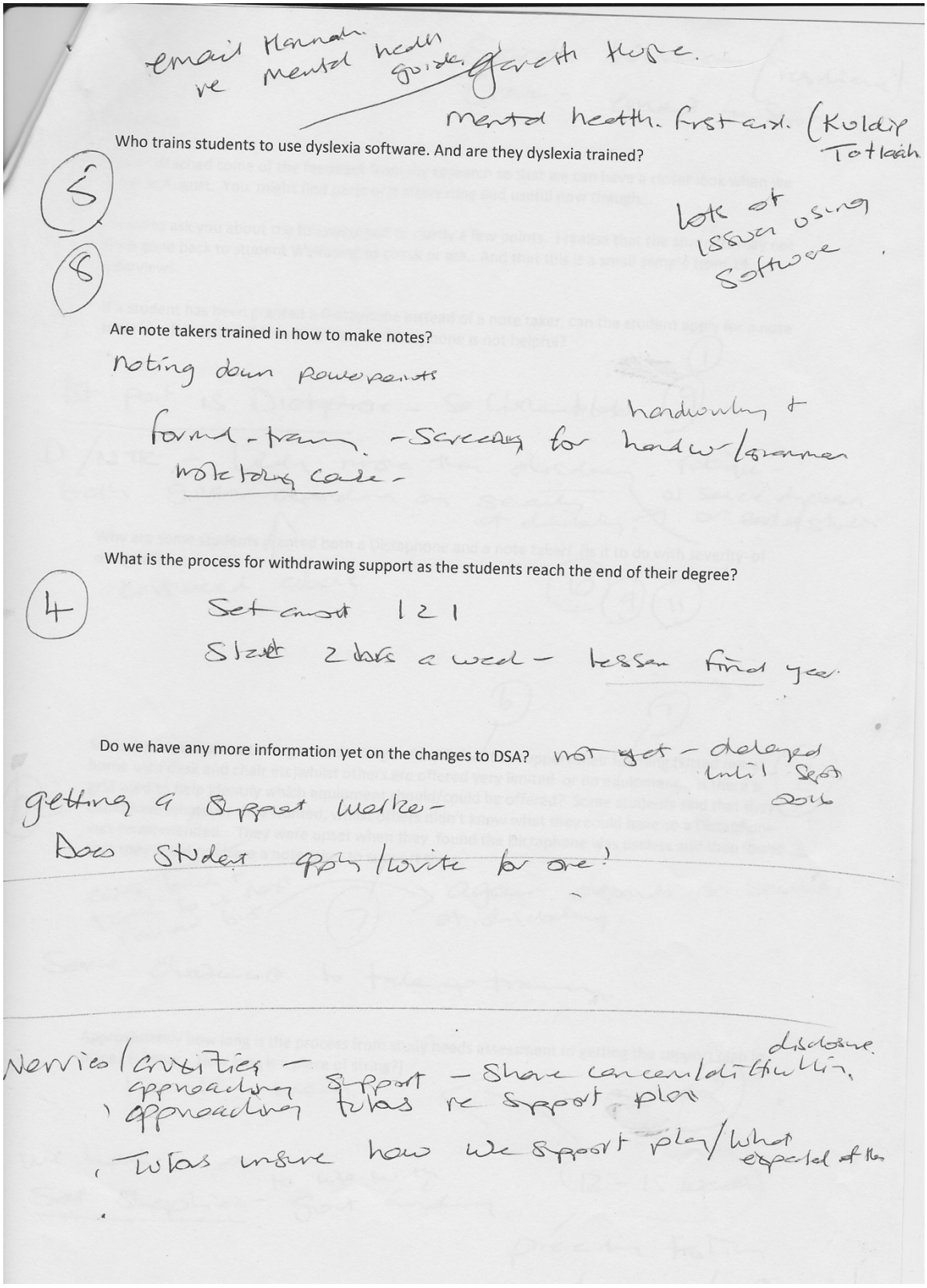
12 – 15 weeks

We have Set Supplies – to use with Quiet Reading.

pre-exam testing. dyslexia / AS

The numbers on the sheet refer to the participant number

Page two of clarification meeting with staff from the Student Wellbeing Service



email Hannah re mental health guide. Gareth Hope.

Mental health. First aid. (Kuldip Tatlaih

Who trains students to use dyslexia software. And are they dyslexia trained?

5

6

lots of issues using software.

Are note takers trained in how to make notes?

noting down Powerpoints

formal - train. - Screening for handwriting + handwriting/grammar

note taking code -

What is the process for withdrawing support as the students reach the end of their degree?

4

Set email 1 2 1

Start 2 hours a week - lessen final year.

Do we have any more information yet on the changes to DSA? not yet - delayed until Sept 2016

getting a Support worker -

Does student apply/write for one?

Nerves/anxieties - disclosure.

approaching Support - Share concerns/difficulties.

approaching tutors re Support plan

Tutors unsure how we Support plan/what expected of them

Appendix two - The proposal for the study

Approval Letter

Date: 19th September 2013
Name: Rosemary Shepherd

Dear Rosemary,

Re: Request for ethical approval for study entitled;
'Are students with a specific learning difficulty supported effectively in HE? A cross sectional study of full time undergraduate students in a university in the UK'.

Thank you for submitting your application for the above mentioned study which was considered by 3 reviewers and ratified by Chairs' Action on behalf of the Social Sciences and Post Graduate Research Ethics Committee (SSPG REC) on 18th September 2013.

Your study has been **approved with recommendations**; please see the comments section of the ethics form attached for the detail of these recommendations. No additional submission will be required for this project, unless you add to your methods or change them significantly.

I wish you every success with your research.

Yours Sincerely

Dr Neil Radford
Chair of the Social Studies and Post Graduate Research Ethics Committee
Request For Ethical Approval For Individual Study / Programme Of Research

Please complete this form and return it to your independent Studies Supervisor or Co-ordinator as advised by local guidance.

Feedback on your application will be via your Independent Studies Supervisor or Co-ordinator.

Your Name:	Rosemary Shepherd	*2. Programme name and Code* PX3AA EdD Doctor of Education
Contact Info	Email r.shepherd@xxxxxxx.ac.uk Tel xxxxx xxxxxxxx Address	
Module Name and Code	*8EU501 Independent Research for Practice: 420 credits (Class Number: 1010)*	
Name of project supervisor		
Title or topic area of proposed study Are students with a specific learning difficulty supported effectively in higher education? A cross sectional study of full time undergraduate students in an East Midlands university.		
What are the aims and objectives of your study?		
• To explore students' perspectives on the learning support they receive during stage one. (All students will have an SPLD). • To capture tutors' perceptions of their role in supporting students with SPLD. • To explore the current legislation on learning support and reasonable adjustment required in HE. • To identify strategies used by students with Specific Learning Difficulties (SPLD) to support their own effective learning in higher education.		
Brief review of relevant literature and rationale for study		
The rationale for the study stems from a recognition within my practice of the rise in numbers of students with Specific Learning Difficulties (SPLD) and the concerns from tutors in meeting the learning needs of such students effectively. SPLD includes learning difficulties such as dyslexia, dyscalculia, dysgraphia and dyspraxia. Over the last decade, the literature (Madriaga, Hanson, Kay and Walker, 2011; VanBergeijk et al, 2008 and Konur, 2006), has also recognised the rise in numbers of students with learning difficulties entering higher education. According to the Higher Education Statistical Agency (HESA 2013) the number of students receiving Disability Support allowance (DSA) and learning support in their studies in the focus university, has increased significantly over the last 10 years.		

The data shows a rise in numbers of students receiving DSA but more importantly the percentage of students who are 'known' to have a disability has risen from 2.9% in 2002 to between 9 and 10% in 2012. There are likely to be students who have not disclosed a disability or who are not aware that they have a disability which are not accounted for in this data.

Discussions with the Student Support Services team in the focus university informs that there were 426 students with an SPLD in 2011/2 and 371 students with an SPLD in 2012/13, with expectations that numbers will continue to increase. Although the statistics for 2012/13 are not currently available on HESA, it can be seen that the numbers of students with an SPLD are likely to cover a large proportion of students who receive learning support in the focus university.

Further discussions with the Student Support Services in the focus university found that those students who receive learning support are likely to be supported by a range of professionals either within the university itself or by outside agencies. In terms of the support received from tutors, students are advised by student services to contact their tutor to discuss any reasonable adjustments that may need to take place in sessions. However, discussions with tutors in my practice suggests that students, although supported by support staff in support services, rarely approach their tutors to discuss their learning needs or reasonable adjustments. This often means that tutors are unaware of any specific adjustments that may need to take place in classroom teaching, learning or assessment, with limited information given on the student's Learning Support Plan. During the first stage of an undergraduate degree and the transition into higher education, such support from tutors is crucial for future success (Jacklin, Robinson, O'Meara and Harris, 2007).

Discussion with tutors in my practice suggests that students with an SPLD tended to approach their tutors to inform them that they had a 2 week extension on their deadlines towards the end of the module when reasonable adjustment or support opportunities had passed. This would suggest that the students probably did not need support earlier from their tutors. However, in my role as a progression leader for stage two students and as an academic tutor across all three stages, our tutorials, after a discussion on assignment feedback, employability and working towards 'graduateness', have often turned to the students' learning needs and difficulties. Students, particularly those with a Learning Support Plan discussed their struggles with the requirements of assessment and of feeling overwhelmed with the amount of reading expected of them, or stressed that they did not understand what was expected of them (Tinklin, Riddell and Wilson 2004). In addition to this, students also suggested that the language used and the

pace of lectures could also be difficult to access (Fuller, Healey, Bradley and Hall, 2004), as could the communication with their tutor to ask for help. Students discussed their difficulty in organising themselves and keeping to deadlines which often caused them to fall behind with their work or fail to gain the grades they feel they have worked so hard for. Such difficulties have been found to impact upon self-esteem and focus for future study (Tinklin, Riddell and Wilson, 2004).

These areas of need should have been discussed with tutors, however, Seale (2010) reminds us that students may remain relatively silent as they encounter what may appear to be a power relationship between the student and tutor, which causes fear and anxiety and isolation in their barriers to learning (also Vickerman and Blundell, 2010). Fuller et al, (2004) suggested that although there has been growing interest in the notion of inclusion within higher education, the voices of students with a disability has 'hardly been heard' (p303, also Holloway, 2001).

Through listening to students and tutors in my practice, there appears to be some Confusion about the type of support that can or needs to be provided (Jacklin and Robinson, 2007). Although some students with SPLD manage their learning very well, there does appear to be some gaps in understanding the needs of those students who on the one hand, appear to experience a lack of cooperation from some tutors in meeting their learning needs (Fuller et at 2004). Whilst on the other hand, tutors who want to be supportive are unsure what support they need to give and are unfamiliar with the support the students may already be receiving away from the classroom.

The disability discrimination legislation in the United Kingdom, and in particular the Education Act 2010 has caused higher education institutions to ensure that there are equal opportunities for students with learning support needs and to make 'anticipatory reasonable adjustments for students with disabilities' (Smith, 2010; HEA 2010; QAA, 2010) and ensure that inclusive practice is found within such institutions. The notion of inclusive practice in HE has been noted since the Dearing Report in 1997, if such legislation is to successfully implemented into higher education classrooms, there needs to be more understanding about learning needs and learning support from the perspective of the student, with a greater emphasis on understanding the dilemmas faced by the tutors and ensuring that the needs of both can be met effectively.

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Outline of study design and methods

In order to capture the perceptions of students and their higher education tutors, the study will use a qualitative approach in order to collect data that can be analysed through content analysis and considered in the light of gaining knowledge and understanding of a range of perspectives on the use and effectiveness of learning support. The study will use an interpretivist paradigm using theory from within Special Educational Needs and Disability and learning theory using social constructivism and a humanistic perspective on student centred learning.

Interviews The research will take the form of a survey by interviewing up to 10% of students with SPLD (approximately 30) across all four faculties of the university. This will provide a cross sectional study of student opinion from all four faculties. The students will be interviewed twice during their first stage of study. The Student Support Services team have agreed to put out a call to all stage one students with an SPLD who are full time 'home' undergraduate students.

The first round of interviews will take place around week six of the Autumn semester with a second round of follow up interviews taking place around week 6 of the Spring semester.

Tutors from all four faculties will also be contacted and invited to take part in an interview during the Spring semester. Approximately 3 from each faculty who teach stage one.

Sample: Please provide a detailed description of the study sample, covering selection, number, age, and if appropriate, inclusion and exclusion criteria.

A random sample of approximately 30 full time, home, undergraduate students who have disclosed that they have an SPLD and who are in stage one of their first degree.

A random sample of tutors teaching stage one undergraduate students.

Are payments or rewards/incentives going to be made to the participants? If so, please give details below.

No

What resources will you require? (e.g. questionnaires, equipment, for example video camera, specialised software; if questionnaires are to be used please give full details here).

Semi structured interview questions to student and higher education staff. (attached)

Recording equipment to record interviews

PC to transcribe interviews

Consent forms and information on the research (attached)

Ethical Considerations (Please indicate how you intend to address each of the following in your study).

- Consent

All students will receive an invitation to participate in the study. This explains why they are

being invited to participate, what taking part involves, the conditions under which data will be collected, stored, managed and analysed. Students who decide not to take part in any part of the study or wish to withdraw at any point will be advised that they are free to do so.

- Deception

No deception is planned, all participants will be fully informed at the point of invitation to participate about the purpose and nature of the evaluation.

- Debriefing

All participants will receive a de-briefing document at the end of the research (attached) with an invitation to view the final report. The debriefing also includes reminder information about the mechanism for withdrawing data from the study if they wish.

- Withdrawal from the investigation

Students who decide initially to participate are free to withdraw from participation at any time, or to withdraw their data from the evaluation for up to three months following the collection of data, this is also explained in the invitation to participate and debriefing documents.

- Confidentiality

All the data is collected under conditions of anonymity. Student and staff names will not be used in the study, however a synonym or code will be used to refer to individual statements.

- Protection of participants

Taking part in the research is not expected to cause distress or harm to any students or members of staff. The questions will be carefully selected to ensure that staff and students can answer at will, and can pass on any questions they would prefer not to answer. Interviews will be arranged during the working day in a semi-private location to ensure a comfortable and safe environment for the interviewee.

- Observation research [complete if applicable

N/A

- Giving advice

The focus of the interview is focussed on gathering information from the staff and students, however, I am happy to answer questions about the research and will refer students to relevant literature or members of staff who can support them further.

Have/Do you intend to request clearance from any other body/organisation? No (please circle as appropriate)

If Yes – please give details below.

The information supplied is, to the best of my knowledge and belief, accurate. I clearly understand my obligations and the rights of the participants. I agree to act at all times in accordance with [the focus university] Ethical Policy for conducting research with human participants.

Date of submission…2nd[t] August 2013……..

Signature of applicant……Rosemary Shepherd

Signature of supervisor (if appropriate)……

<u>For Committee Use</u> *Reference Number (Subject area initials/year/ID number)…….*

Date received 02/09/2013 Date approved …… Signed……

Comments:

Approved with recommendations

- Informed Consent – Some detail of the amount of time each participant will be interviewed would help, as this would better inform participants of their requirements meaning they have more chance to give fully informed consent.

- You need to provide further details of how the data will be used: Is it solely for your Doctoral work, or may you also use the data in any publications/journals, etc? You mention 'the information you have provided will be handled in the strictest confidence and will only be used for the purpose of this research', but you are not clear if the findings will only be used as part of your Doctoral work, or for other purposes, such as publication in journals.

- Data Protection - You need to explain how the data will be kept safe and how you will store the data correctly. How long will the data be kept for? What will you do with this evidence to maintain its security after the project ends?

  You need to point out who will have access to the data? Just yourself or will you be discussing the data with your supervisor?

- Although you acknowledge the fact that participation in the study is voluntary, I feel that your position as a lecturer recruiting colleagues and students may influence their decision to participate, as some students may almost feel obliged to take part. Like I said, you have covered this, but I just feel that you really need to reinforce to your sample that their participation is absolutely voluntary, and non-compulsory in any way.

- You have identified that 'All the data is collected under conditions of anonymity. Student and staff names will not be used in the study, however a synonym or code will be used to refer to individual statements.', but you haven't provided details of how this will be achieved in the information sheet or consent forms. It would be best if you could point this out to your participants.

Indicative questions for student interviews - interview two (needs piloting)

1. How have you settled during year into university? Seen academic tutor? Helpful? Feedback on grades?
2. What enjoyed about semester one? What could have made it better?
3. What types of learning support did you receive? (support worker, equipment, outside agency, tutor support
4. How effective was the support you received? In what ways did this support help you in class? (takes notes, records lecture, proofreads, produces resources)
5. How effective was your support plan?
6. Did you use the extra time given on your support plan for assessments?
7. How useful was this extra time? Useful or hindrance?
8. What type of contact did you have with your support worker? Did you discuss your needs regularly (as necessary) How often do you meet?
9. What impact did discussing your support plan with your tutor have on your learning?
10. What happened? Helpful?
11. If not approached tutor, are there any reasons why not approached tutor?
12. Do your module leaders know what other support you are receiving?
13. What would make it easier for you to approach your tutor?
14. What type of support did you find most useful to meet your learning needs?
15. Can you give an example of a good learning experience?
16. What happened and why do you think this was a good/effective learning experience?
17. Can you give an example of a difficult learning experience?
18. What happened and why do you think this wasn't a good/effective learning experience?
19. Were you being supported at this time? What could have made this a better learning experience?
20. Have you had access to a study skills class to support your learning in HE?
21. How effective was this in helping you to develop strategies to support your own learning alongside the support from SSIS and tutors?
22. How are you measuring whether these strategies are effective?

23. Do you have any questions for me?

Indicative questions for tutor interviews (needs piloting)

1. What types of learning support needs do students in your classes have?
2. What percent (approx.) of your students need learning support?
3. What has been expected of you in terms of supporting learning?
4. What are your thoughts around supporting students in HE?
5. Are you aware of HE legislation on reasonable adjustments?
6. What do you think a reasonable adjustment is?
7. Have students approached you to discuss their LSPs?
8. How helpful is the support plan in helping you provide support?
9. Do you have support staff attending your classes?
10. What types of support do they give to students?
11. Is this support effective in supporting you as a tutor?
12. What do you do with support plans?
13. Have you contacted support services for support?
14. How useful was this?
15. Did you get the support you needed?
16. Have you had CPD training in supporting students with SPLD?
17. How could student support help you to support students with SPLD more effectively?

Background to the study

Study title: Are students with a specific learning difficulty supported effectively in Higher Education? A cross sectional study of full time undergraduate students in a university in the UK.

At the [focus university, we are aware that approximately 10% of our students have a LSP (HESA 2012) with a large proportion of these students disclosing a specific learning disability (SPLD) such as Dyslexia, Dyscalculia, Dyspraxia or Dysgraphia.

We pride ourselves in preparing students to be successful in their studies and well prepared for graduate employment, however, in order to ensure that this happens, the support systems in place need to be effectively supporting students and helping them to develop strategies for success.

There is much literature to inform us that tutors are eager to be inclusive in their practice, however it is they are often unsure what is expected of them in terms of making reasonable adjustments for students with a specific learning difficulty. On the other hand, although students with an SPLD may have experienced good communication with support services there are concerns that these students may not be accessing support or discussing their learning needs with their tutors. This often limited communication

between the student and their tutor is likely to cause a mismatch in the expectations and experiences of learning for the student which might impact the student's success in HE.

Methodology

The study will involve two semi structured interviews with each student in the first stage of their degree (one each semester) so that a comparison can be made of the student's perception of supportive provision during the first stage of their degree. Tutors from stage one courses across 4 faculties will also be interviewed in order that their perceptions in terms of their role in supporting students can be captured.

Confidentiality and Anonymity

All information collected will be kept strictly confidential and anonymous (according to BERA 2011 regulations (http://www.bera.ac.uk/publications/Ethical%20Guidelines) with all data collected being stored in a locked cabinet and accessed solely by the researcher. All data generated by the study will be retained for a period of five years according to the University of Derby's policy on Academic Integrity.

This research has been approved by the [focus university Research Ethics Committee for the Doctorate in Education (EdD).

The results from the research will be included in a doctoral thesis. A report on the final study will be made available to you by emailing me at r.shepherd@derby.ac.uk with 'Doctoral research' in the title.

Please sign below if you consent to taking part in this study.

Name……. Date……..

Thank you for your help, Rosemary Shepherd October 2013

Participant Consent Form

Title of Project:

Are students with a specific learning difficulty supported effectively in HE? A cross sectional study of full time undergraduate students in a university in the UK.

Please tick

I confirm that I have been given and have read and understood the information sheet for the above study and have asked and received answers to any questions raised	[ ]
I understand that my participation is voluntary and that I am free to withdraw at any time without giving a reason and without my rights being affected in any way	[ ]
I understand that the researcher will hold all information and data collected securely and in confidence and that all efforts will be made to ensure that I cannot be identified as a participant in the study	[ ]
I agree to take part in the above study	[ ]

_____ _____

Signature ***Date***

Thank you
Rosemary Shepherd
r.shepherd@xxxxx.ac.uk
E109a xxxxx xxxxxx

De-briefing

Thank you for taking part in this study all the information you have provided will be handled in the strictest confidence and will only be used for the purpose of this research. If you have any further queries or you wish to withdraw from this study please do not

hesitate to contact me on 01332 592296 or email at r.shepherd@xxxxxx.ac.uk

In the event of withdrawal please contact me no later than the 1st April 2014 so that I can allow time for your information to be withdrawn from the study as it may not be possible to do so after this date due to submission deadlines.

If you would like to see a copy of the final report please contact me on the email address above and I will forward a copy to you.

Many thanks
Rosemary Shepherd

r.shepherd@xxxxxx.ac.uk
E109a xxxxx xxxxxx

PLEASE SUBMIT ALONG WITH THIS APPLICATION THE FOLLOWING DOCUMENTATION WHERE APPROPRIATE (please tick to indicate the material that has been included or provide information as to why it is not available):

Questionnaires/Interview schedules ☐ Yes

Covering letters/Information sheets ☐ Yes

Briefing and debriefing material ☐ Yes

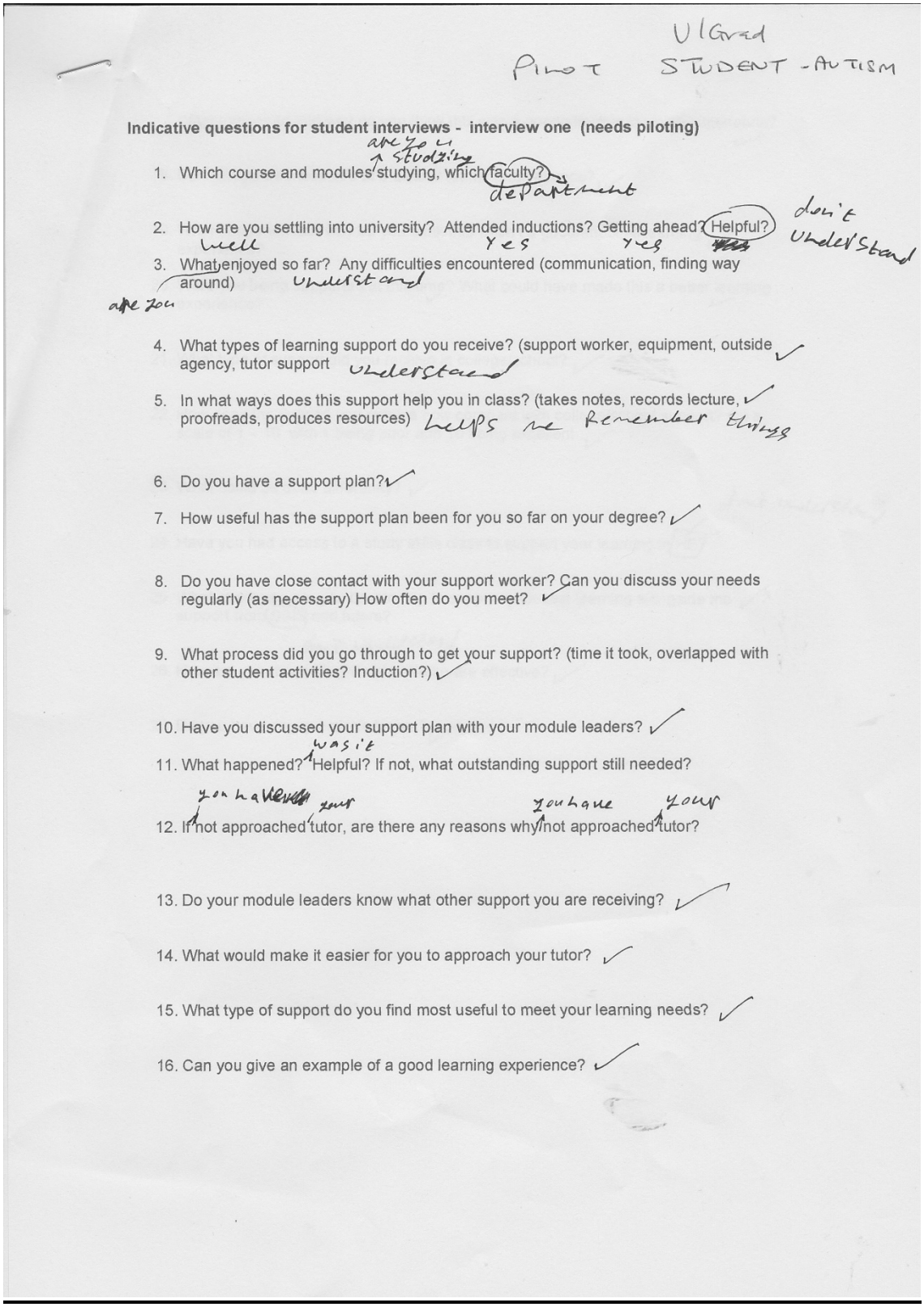
Consent forms for participants ☐ Yes

Outcome (Val Poultney)

Approved with recommendations as per my comments throughout the script.

Pilot of questions for the interview

Undergraduate student number one – Asperger's Syndrome



UGrad
PILOT STUDENT - AUTISM

Indicative questions for student interviews - interview one (needs piloting)

1. Which course and modules studying, which faculty? are you studying department
2. How are you settling into university? Attended inductions? Getting ahead? Helpful? well Yes Yes don't understand
3. What enjoyed so far? Any difficulties encountered (communication, finding way around) understand are you
4. What types of learning support do you receive? (support worker, equipment, outside agency, tutor support understand
5. In what ways does this support help you in class? (takes notes, records lecture, proofreads, produces resources) helps me remember things
6. Do you have a support plan?
7. How useful has the support plan been for you so far on your degree?
8. Do you have close contact with your support worker? Can you discuss your needs regularly (as necessary) How often do you meet?
9. What process did you go through to get your support? (time it took, overlapped with other student activities? Induction?)
10. Have you discussed your support plan with your module leaders?
11. What happened? was it Helpful? If not, what outstanding support still needed?
12. If not approached tutor, are there any reasons why you have not approached your tutor? you have never your
13. Do your module leaders know what other support you are receiving?
14. What would make it easier for you to approach your tutor?
15. What type of support do you find most useful to meet your learning needs?
16. Can you give an example of a good learning experience?

17. What happened and why do you think this was a good/effective learning experience?

18. Can you give an example of a difficult learning experience?

19. What happened and why do you think this wasn't a good/effective learning experience?

20. Were you being supported at this time? What could have made this a better learning experience?

21. What type of support did you receive in college/school?

22. How does the support you receive now compare with college/school support? On a scale of 1 – 10 with 1 being poor and 10 being excellent

23. What could be done differently?

don't understand

24. Have you had access to a study skills class to support your learning in HE?

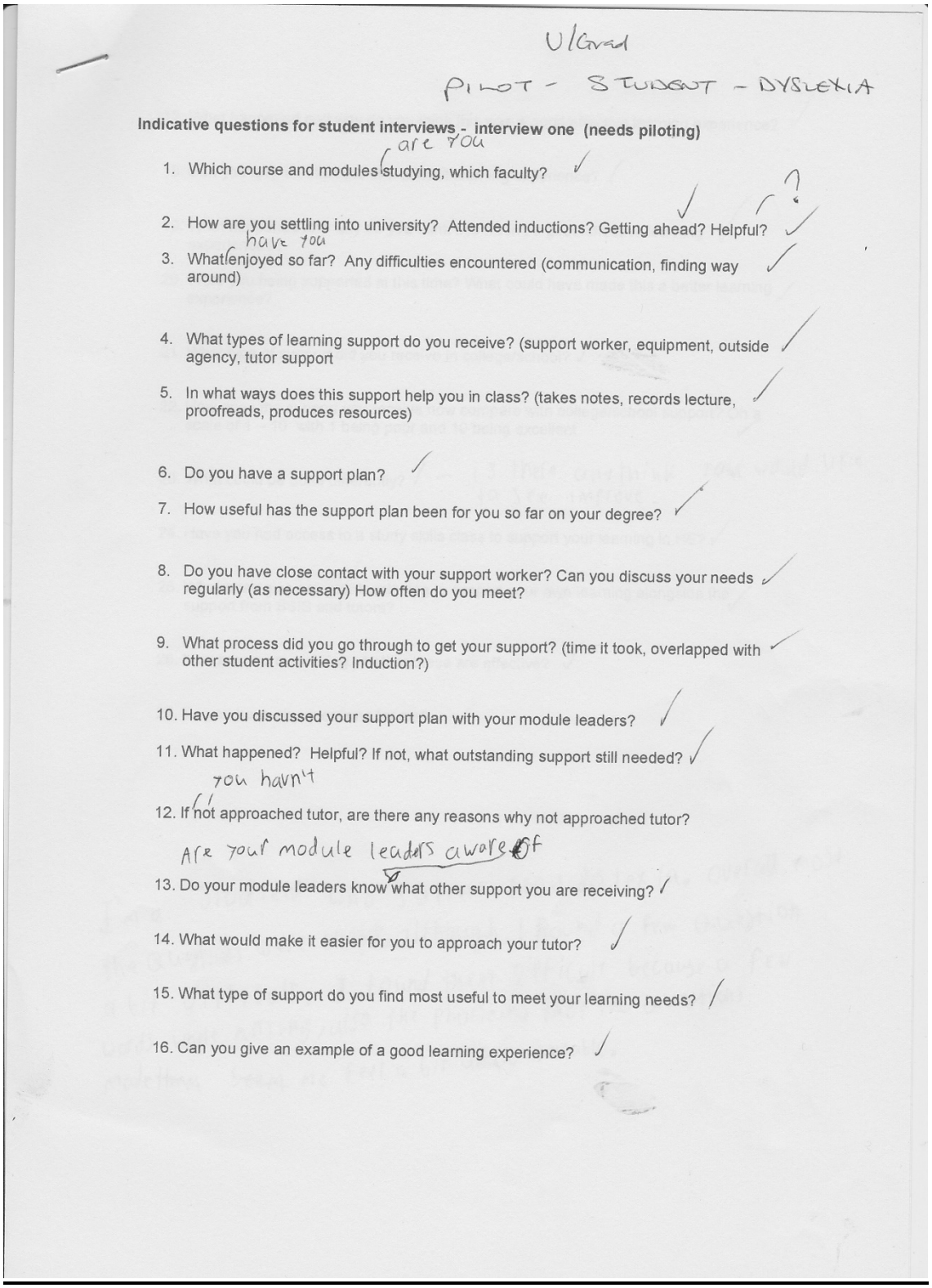
25. What strategies are you developing to support your own learning alongside the support from SSIS and tutors?

don't understand

26. How are you measuring whether these are effective?

27. Do you have any questions for me?

Undergraduate Student number 2 Dyslexia



U/Grad

PILOT - STUDENT - DYSLEXIA

Indicative questions for student interviews - interview one (needs piloting)

1. Which course and modules are you studying, which faculty?
2. How are you settling into university? Attended inductions? Getting ahead? Helpful?
3. What have you enjoyed so far? Any difficulties encountered (communication, finding way around)
4. What types of learning support do you receive? (support worker, equipment, outside agency, tutor support
5. In what ways does this support help you in class? (takes notes, records lecture, proofreads, produces resources)
6. Do you have a support plan?
7. How useful has the support plan been for you so far on your degree?
8. Do you have close contact with your support worker? Can you discuss your needs regularly (as necessary) How often do you meet?
9. What process did you go through to get your support? (time it took, overlapped with other student activities? Induction?)
10. Have you discussed your support plan with your module leaders?
11. What happened? Helpful? If not, what outstanding support still needed?
12. If not approached tutor, are there any reasons why not approached tutor? you haven't
13. Do your module leaders know what other support you are receiving? Are your module leaders aware of
14. What would make it easier for you to approach your tutor?
15. What type of support do you find most useful to meet your learning needs?
16. Can you give an example of a good learning experience?

17. What happened and why do you think this was a good/effective learning experience? ✓

18. Can you give an example of a difficult learning experience? ✓

19. What happened and why do you think this wasn't a good/effective learning experience? ✓

20. Were you being supported at this time? What could have made this a better learning experience? ✓

21. What type of support did you receive in college/school? ✓

22. How does the support you receive now compare with college/school support? On a scale of 1 – 10 with 1 being poor and 10 being excellent ✓

23. What could be done differently? ✓ – is there anything you would like to see improve.

24. Have you had access to a study skills class to support your learning in HE? ✓

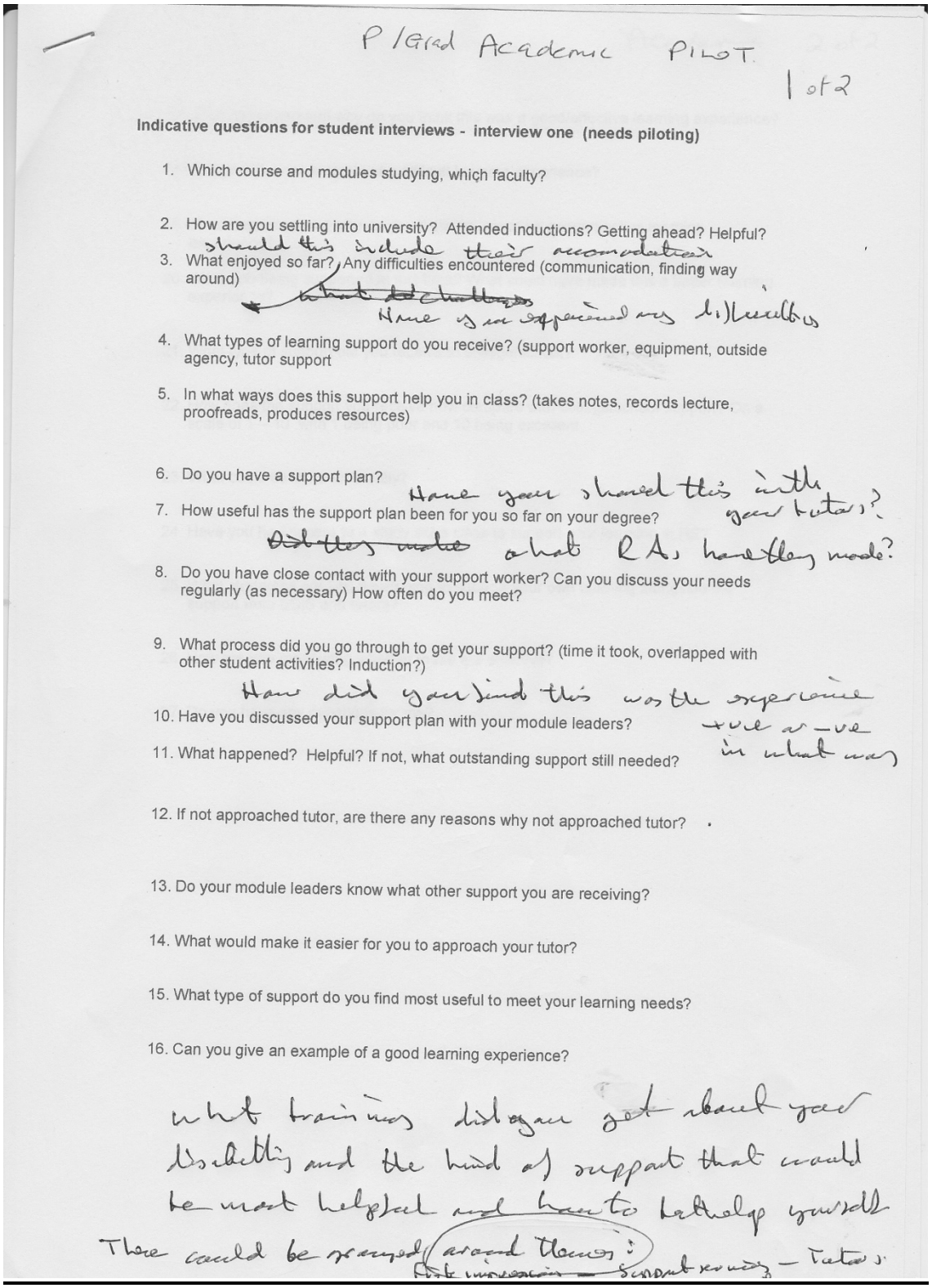
25. What strategies are you developing to support your own learning alongside the support from SSIS and tutors? ✓

26. How are you measuring whether these are effective? ✓

27. Do you have any questions for me? ✓

I'm a Studtent who suffers from dislexia. overall most the Questions were alright, although I found a few Question a bit Difficult. I found them difficult because a few words whete missing, also the phrseing of the Questions made them ~~seem~~ me feel a bit uncomfortable.

Post graduate academic



P/Grad Academic PILOT

1 of 2

Indicative questions for student interviews - interview one (needs piloting)

1. Which course and modules studying, which faculty?
2. How are you settling into university? Attended inductions? Getting ahead? Helpful?
3. What enjoyed so far? Any difficulties encountered (communication, finding way around)
4. What types of learning support do you receive? (support worker, equipment, outside agency, tutor support
5. In what ways does this support help you in class? (takes notes, records lecture, proofreads, produces resources)
6. Do you have a support plan?
7. How useful has the support plan been for you so far on your degree?
8. Do you have close contact with your support worker? Can you discuss your needs regularly (as necessary) How often do you meet?
9. What process did you go through to get your support? (time it took, overlapped with other student activities? Induction?)
10. Have you discussed your support plan with your module leaders?
11. What happened? Helpful? If not, what outstanding support still needed?
12. If not approached tutor, are there any reasons why not approached tutor?
13. Do your module leaders know what other support you are receiving?
14. What would make it easier for you to approach your tutor?
15. What type of support do you find most useful to meet your learning needs?
16. Can you give an example of a good learning experience?

should this include their accomodation

Have you experienced any difficulties

Have you shared this with your tutors?

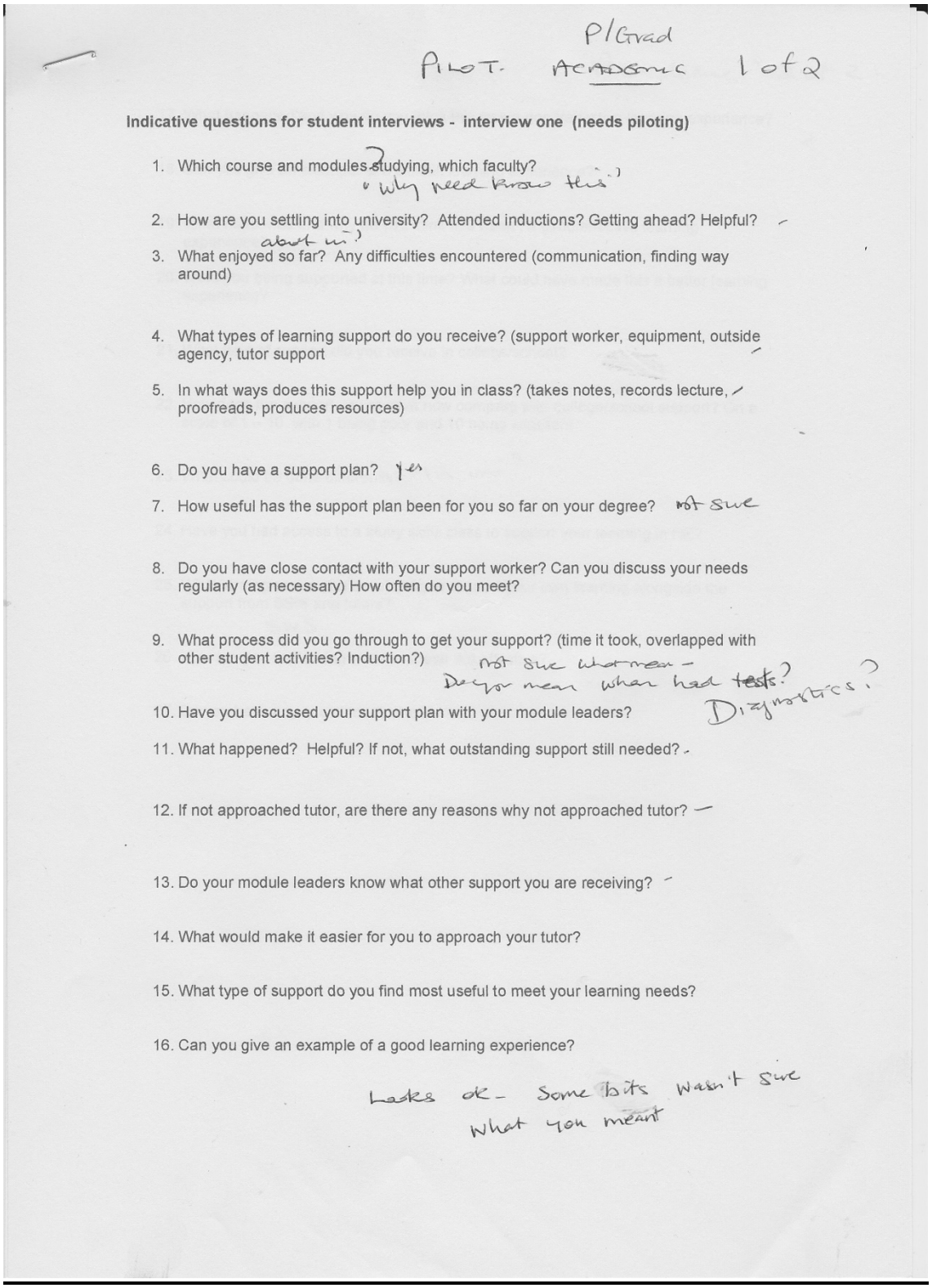
what RAs have they made?

How did you find this was the experience +ve or -ve in what way

what trainings did you get about your disability and the kind of support that would be most helpful and how to help yourself

There could be grouped around themes: Risk management — Support services — Tutors

Post graduate academic



P/Grad
PILOT. ACADEMIC 1 of 2

Indicative questions for student interviews - interview one (needs piloting)

1. Which course and modules studying, which faculty? ? why need know this?)
2. How are you settling into university? Attended inductions? Getting ahead? Helpful?
3. What enjoyed so far? Any difficulties encountered (communication, finding way around) about uni?)
4. What types of learning support do you receive? (support worker, equipment, outside agency, tutor support
5. In what ways does this support help you in class? (takes notes, records lecture, proofreads, produces resources)
6. Do you have a support plan? Yes
7. How useful has the support plan been for you so far on your degree? not sure
8. Do you have close contact with your support worker? Can you discuss your needs regularly (as necessary) How often do you meet?
9. What process did you go through to get your support? (time it took, overlapped with other student activities? Induction?) not sure what mean - Do you mean when had tests?
10. Have you discussed your support plan with your module leaders? Dizgnostics?
11. What happened? Helpful? If not, what outstanding support still needed?
12. If not approached tutor, are there any reasons why not approached tutor?
13. Do your module leaders know what other support you are receiving?
14. What would make it easier for you to approach your tutor?
15. What type of support do you find most useful to meet your learning needs?
16. Can you give an example of a good learning experience?

Looks ok - Some bits wasn't sure what you meant

Academic 2 of 2

17. What happened and why do you think this was a good/effective learning experience?

18. Can you give an example of a difficult learning experience?

19. What happened and why do you think this wasn't a good/effective learning experience?

20. Were you being supported at this time? What could have made this a better learning experience? by SWS by lecture? clarity here

21. What type of support did you receive in college/school?

22. How does the support you receive now compare with college/school support? On a scale of 1 – 10 with 1 being poor and 10 being excellent

23. What could be done differently? In uni?

24. Have you had access to a study skills class to support your learning in HE?

25. What strategies are you developing to support your own learning alongside the support from ~~SSIS~~ and tutors?
SWS

26. How are you measuring whether these are effective?

27. Do you have any questions for me?

The interview questions used in the study

Interview script – student interview

I am interested in finding out your perspective on learning support in higher education, particularly for students with specific learning difficulties. Anything we discuss will be held in the strictest confidence and will remain anonymous. You have the right to withdraw or pass on any questions you wish. A transcript will be sent to you for your approval shortly after the interview has taken place.
Are you happy to continue?

1. How are you settling into university life? Attended inductions last term?
2. What have you enjoyed most so far?
3. Have you encountered any specific difficulties? If so, what? Sought help?

Study needs assessment and the learning support plan

4. I want to ask you first about two documents, your study needs assessment and your learning support plan.
5. What types of learning support is outlined in your study needs assessment? (support worker, range of workers?), equipment, outside agency, tutor support)
6. In what ways does this support help you in class? (takes notes, records lecture, proofreads, produces resources)
7. What adjustments are outlined and has the university made those adjustments for you?
8. What support recommendations have been made to you? (dragon software, other?) are you using it, how effective is it?
9. What process did you go through to get your support? (time it took, overlapped with other student activities? Missed induction?)
10. Did you attend the 'get ahead' event? (Useful? Early enrolment, support in place, settling in?)

The study needs assessment is linked to the support plan – discussing the support plan with module leaders

11. Have you discussed your learning needs or support plan with your module tutors?
12. What happened? Helpful? Did they listen? How do you know you were heard?(changes, support discussed) (If not approached tutor, reasons why?)
13. How approachable was your tutor? What would make it easier for you to approach your tutor/module leader?

Experience of learning at the university

14. Can you give an example of a good learning experience you have had this year?
15. Why do you think this was a good/effective learning experience? What made it a good learning experience?
16. Can you give an example of where you really struggled to learn?
17. What happened and what made it such a difficult learning experience?
18. Were you being supported at this time? What could have made this a better learning experience?
19. What type of support would you find most helpful to meet your learning needs? (curriculum, environment, lectures, activities)

Previous support at college/school

20. What type of support did you receive in college/school?
21. How does the support you receive in HE compare with college/school support? Similarities, differences, strengths, weaknesses?

Improving learning

22. What do you think could be done differently, that would improve your quality of learning in HE? (wish list?)
23. Have you had access to a study skills class to support your learning in HE?
24. What strategies are you using to support your own learning alongside the support from SSIS and tutors?
25. How do you know whether these strategies are working for you? (grades, feedback?)
26. Do you have any questions for me?

Thank you. Issue of debriefing document, reminder of confidentiality, anonymity

A sample of 3 out of the 14 completed consent forms

Participant Consent Form

Title of Project:
What are students' perceptions of learning support and what are the dilemmas for tutors in getting the learning support right for students with specific learning difficulties in the classroom?: A cross sectional study on inclusive practice in an East Midlands university.

	Please tick
I confirm that I have been given and have read and understood the information sheet for the above study and have asked and received answers to any questions raised	[✓]
I understand that my participation is voluntary and that I am free to withdraw at any time without giving a reason and without my rights being affected in any way	[✓]
I understand that the researcher will hold all information and data collected securely and in confidence and that all efforts will be made to ensure that I cannot be identified as a participant in the study	[✓]
I agree to take part in the above study	[✓]

C D. [redacted] — 24/3/14

Signature ***Date***

Thank you
Rosemary Shepherd
[redacted]
E109a [redacted]

Carl.

Participant Consent Form

Title of Project:
What are students' perceptions of learning support and what are the dilemmas for tutors in getting the learning support right for students with specific learning difficulties in the classroom?: A cross sectional study on inclusive practice in an East Midlands university.

	Please tick
I confirm that I have been given and have read and understood the information sheet for the above study and have asked and received answers to any questions raised	[✓]
I understand that my participation is voluntary and that I am free to withdraw at any time without giving a reason and without my rights being affected in any way	[✓]
I understand that the researcher will hold all information and data collected securely and in confidence and that all efforts will be made to ensure that I cannot be identified as a participant in the study	[✓]
I agree to take part in the above study	[✓]

Signature R Shepherd ***Date*** 17-2-14.

Thank you
Rosemary Shepherd
[redacted]
E109a [redacted]

X300/1/[redacted]
Rev

Participant Consent Form

Title of Project:
What are students' perceptions of learning support and what are the dilemmas for tutors in getting the learning support right for students with specific learning difficulties in the classroom?: A cross sectional study on inclusive practice in an East Midlands university.

	Please tick
I confirm that I have been given and have read and understood the information sheet for the above study and have asked and received answers to any questions raised	[✓]
I understand that my participation is voluntary and that I am free to withdraw at any time without giving a reason and without my rights being affected in any way	[✓]
I understand that the researcher will hold all information and data collected securely and in confidence and that all efforts will be made to ensure that I cannot be identified as a participant in the study	[✓]
I agree to take part in the above study	[✓]

Signature: [signature] Date: 17/02/14

Thank you
Rosemary Shepherd
[redacted]
E109a [redacted]

Ann
X300/2.[redacted]